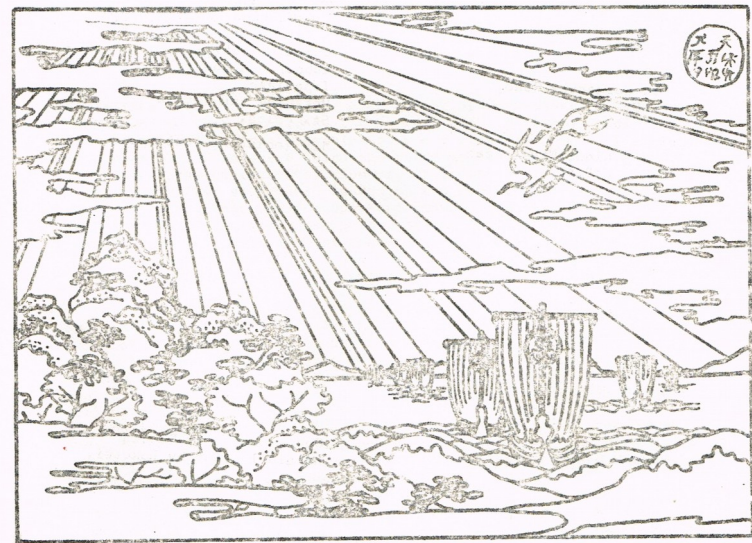


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LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

No 8



INTRODUCTION

This issue of our discussion journal is edited and produced by members of the group SOCIAL REVOLUTION, in Hull and Mansfield. Signed articles do not necessarily represent the views of the whole group.

We welcome articles, views and comment for future issues of Libertarian Communism. These should be sent to us in HULL and will be forwarded to the group publishing the next issue.

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A GLIMPSE AT CHINESE POLITICS

One of the shortcomings of the many well-meaning people who have vague hopes for a new society is that they cannot bear the thought that there nowhere yet exists a society in which all men and women control their own lives. They need to believe in some paradise which has already fulfilled their dreams and which they can adore blindly without having to work out for themselves the real problems of human liberation. Stalin's Russia used to serve the function of a "workers' fatherland", but has become much less popular since Khrushchev revealed a little bit of the truth about the Stalin dictatorship, the purges and labour camps. Now another Stalin dictatorship, more distant and less accessible, benefits from the longings of discontented left-wingers abroad-- Mao's China.

Like a previous generation of travellers returning from Russia, select visitors return from China with glowing accounts of the new life of hard-working, self-sacrificing but happy workers and peasants, all taking part in the running of their factories and communes under the kindly gaze of the great leader. After two weeks of being shepherded along the prepared tourist trail, any remaining temptation to criticise is overcome by the racist thought that, after all, these Chinese aren't really like us: that we wouldn't like, for example, long sessions studying Mao Tse-tung Thought after a hard day's work doesn't mean they would want to object.

Socialists reject the official myth of the State Capitalist regimes that power in them is held by the mass of working people, that they are "socialist" or "dictatorships of the proletariat" or whatever. Countries like Russia and China are ruled by tiny elites of ruthless Communist Party bureaucrats. However, it is often difficult to show this clearly from statements issued by the regimes themselves, the only statements that their supporters cannot dismiss as "capitalist propaganda". During the worst period of the Stalinist purges, the Russian press was full of news about the new constitution being discussed throughout the country -- a marvellous scrap of waste paper guaranteeing citizens all the democratic freedoms they could ask for.

A few months ago I picked up in a lefty bookshop a beautifully printed booklet (10p) entitled "The Tenth National Congress of the Communist Party of China (Documents)". On the first page, a multi-coloured portrait of the great helmsman smiles out at us, the face of the haggard chain-smoking old dictator made smooth and rosy. After the photos of twenty more leading "comrades" (not yet exposed as double-dealing renegades) we come to such treats as "Report to the Tenth National Congress of the CPC", delivered by the up-and-coming Wang Hungwen, the said Constitution, and a couple of press communiques. You will be relieved to discover that the two reports were unanimously adopted by the Congress.

Once you get the hang of it, it's quite easy to extract some sort of meaning from the jargon and endlessly repeated liturgical formulas in this stuff. Surprisingly enough, that meaning is a fairly frank

explanation of the workings of a remorselessly dictatorial system. We still don't know how accurately these documents reflect the real social and political life of Maoist China, but they surely have some significance. So let's take a quick guided tour through the constitution. If you don't trust me, you can check up by getting your own copy straight from the Foreign Languages Publishing House in Peking.

First of all, Article 7 says that all other Chinese organisations - State organs, the Army and militia, so-called labour unions, peasant associations, women's federations, the Youth League, the Red Guards and the Little Red Guards (how sweet), and "mass organisations" - must accept the centralised leadership of the Communist Party. Again, Wang emphasises that "of the seven sectors - industry, agriculture, commerce, culture and education, the Army, the government and the Party - it is the Party that exercises overall leadership". He goes on to say that a Party committee's leadership must not be replaced by a joint conference of several sectors, which presumably had happened in some places. It is clear from the overall context that "leadership" means not merely a gentle guidance, as Maoist sympathisers might like to imagine, but the power to impose directives, by force if need be. In a genuinely Socialist society, of course, we don't have such things as leaders, commerce, governments and Parties.

Next, we ask how the Party is organised. "The organisational principle of the Party is democratic centralism." Well, there's no difficulty in locating the centralism. So let's forget the democracy for the time being, and set out the centralist features of the Constitution :-

1. Article 5 - The individual is subordinate to the organisation, the minority is subordinate to the majority, the lower level is subordinate to the higher level, and the entire Party is subordinate to the Central Committee.

2. Article 6 - Leading bodies convene Congresses (National Party Congress only every 5 years, local Congresses only every 3 years), but they can convene them before the due date or postpone them if they wish. Further, the convening of Congresses at one level is subject to approval by higher organs.

3. Primary organisations are set up in factories, mines and other enterprises, communes, offices, schools, shops, neighbourhoods, Army companies and other primary units. These units include the vast majority of the 28 million Party members. These units hold elections every two years, and the elections can be brought forward or delayed. The main tasks of the primary units are indoctrination, and "to fulfil every task assigned by the Party and the State". No mention is made of any decision-making powers at this level - Articles 11 and 12.

4. In elections there is no choice between representatives (let alone delegates) or programmes. There is a process called "democratic consultation" - some kind of behind the scenes negotiations.

5. The plenary session of the Central Committee is convened by and "elects" the Political Bureau of the Central Committee (20 men and one woman, Mao's wife), which exercises the functions and powers of the Central Committee between the not very frequent plenary sessions. Right at the centre, the Politburo contains a Standing Committee (nine men), under whose leadership "a number of necessary organs, which are compact and efficient, shall be set up to attend to the day-to-day work of the Party, the government and the Army in a centralised way" - Article 9.

The exact relationship of the Standing Committee to the Politburo is left unclear, but it is clear that these nine men have a firm double hold over Chinese society. First, they directly control the "necessary

organs". Second, they "lead" the Politburo, which "leads" the Central Committee, which "leads" the whole Party, which "leads" China. Over this hierarchy their control is perhaps a little less direct, with some decision-making power held by other high-ranking officials.

So much for centralism - now what about democracy? As Article 5 says "it is essential to create a political situation in which there are both centralism and democracy". Well, primary units (Article 12) are instructed to "maintain close ties with the masses, constantly listen to their opinions and demands", but this confers on the "masses" no specific rights at all. It is what all sensible rulers do who want to keep a watch on what their subjects are thinking. Then there is all the "consultation" and "deliberation", which again guarantees nothing.

The most remarked on "democratic" provision of the Constitution, made much of in Western news reports, is this section of Article 5 :-

"Party members have the right to criticise organisations and leading members of the Party at all levels and make proposals to them. If a Party member holds different views with regard to the decisions or directives of the Party organisations, he is allowed to reserve his views and has the right to by-pass the immediate leadership and report directly to higher levels, up to and including the Central Committee and the Chairman of the Central Committee. It is absolutely impermissible to suppress criticism and to retaliate."

But this rule gives no real power to the rank-and-file Party member. He or she cannot organise a movement to implement alternative policies, or even publicise his or her views, but only appeal to big bureaucrats over the head of little bureaucrats. If the higher level agrees with the comrade, they countermand the dictates of the lower level; if not, our comrade is in even deeper water. The real aim of this procedure is to tighten up central control by keeping higher levels well informed about what goes on at lower levels.

Some people's idea of democracy might be Wang's report that:-

"...the Party committees of the provinces, municipalities and the autonomous regions, the Party committees of the greater military commands and the Party organisations directly under the Central all set up groups for the revision of the Party Constitution, extensively consulted the masses inside and outside the Party and formally submitted 41 drafts to the Central Committee. At the same time, the masses inside and outside the Party in various places directly mailed in many suggestions for revision. The draft of the revised Constitution now submitted to the Congress for discussion was drawn up according to Chairman Mao's specific proposals for the revision and on the basis of serious study of all the drafts and suggestions sent in."

We wonder whether anyone sent in suggestions like - direct election of delegates who can be mandated and recalled at any time to councils at all levels, independent working class organisation, freedom of speech, press and association, abolition of bureaucratic organs. And what happened to anyone who did send them in. During the Cultural Revolution, when Central control was temporarily weakened, groups such as the Sheng Wu Lien in Hunan Province raised this type of demand, and were later suppressed as "ultra-leftists", many members being shot after appearing before mass kangaroo courts.

We should not imagine that members of the "great, glorious and correct" Communist Party of China have an easy life, passively obeying directions

from above without having to think for themselves. For if their higher ups are unmasked as traitors by a rival faction, then they too will be exposed to attack for opposing the real Party line. The Party line is a straight and consistent path forward if you study hard enough to detect it. Chou says :-

"In the last fifty years our Party has gone through ten major struggles between the two lines...and such struggles will occur ten, twenty or thirty times."

And it is "an irrefutable truth" that the correct line always wins out in the end :-

"If one's line is incorrect, one's downfall is inevitable, even with the control of the central, local and Army leadership."

Treason never flourishes, for if it flourish, none dare call it so!

The incredible charges which Chinese bureaucrats make against their defeated rivals are made necessary by the dogma that whoever is in control at present represents "the dictatorship of the proletariat". Any opponent must be an agent of the "class enemy". After unanimously expelling Lin Biao from the Party "once and for all" (he was at the time dead!), the Congress then expelled "Chen Pota,...anti-communist Kuomintang element! Trotskyist, renegade, enemy agent and revisionist". In this abuse, the only label which may mean something specific is "Trotskyist". Chen seemed to be encouraging democratisation during the Cultural Revolution, such people are inaccurately called Trotskyists by the Stalinists and Maoists.

So the Partymember must often weigh up the risks of resisting the present leadership, in the expectation that the opposing faction will consolidate its power, against the risks of being later exposed as an accomplice of the enemy. The sort of risks involved are hinted at by Wang :-

"When confronted with issues that concern the line and the overall situation, a true Communist must act without any selfish considerations and dare to go against the tide, fearing neither removal from his post, expulsion from the Party, imprisonment, divorce or guillotine."

That's life in People's China! No wonder they worry about "combining unity of will with personal ease of mind and liveliness".

As for our fellow workers in China, we can know very little about their struggles, but we are sure they will keep up the fight against their rulers, the group which Sheng Wu Lien called "the red capitalist class". As part of the world working class, they will yet take part in building a genuine Socialist community.

Stephen Stefan.

NOTE -- See also, article entitled "A Socialist in China" Socialist Standard, November 1974. and "Thesis on the Chinese Revolution" by Cajo Brendel, Solidarity pamphlet 25p.

LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

The following is an extract from a much longer document entitled 'Towards a Communist Perspective' written by 2 people active in Community struggles in Islington, London, and in the 'Islington Gutter Press.'

How do people concretely experience things and struggle, and how do we, the libertarians left contribute to this process?

As we have seen within capitalist society peoples prime way of experiencing their life process is as individuals. They do what's natural, what they feel they must do to live. They work for some money, spend that money how they wish. They each look out from their own individual lives at an anonymous world, which seems beyond their control. However there are many processes and tendencies within that society which they contribute to and which involves them and affects them whether they like it or not.

Society gets more and more complex all the time, people are snared into an ever more total social web. At every point people rely on others increasingly and yet seem more and more distanced from these others. People always think that they are doing things as individuals but this is not in fact the case. What they are not conscious of is that all their individual actions coincide with those of others to keep a certain social order going that is in fact beyond their control but which they think of as natural. Until it goes wrong.

People are actually caught within a tight class system. What does being in a class mean? Because of these processes at work within society, behind peoples backs, patterns are established which repeat themselves within millions of peoples individual life situations. If someone is working class it means he or she will feel these external pressures pushing them in certain directions. Things will happen to them, which they experience as an individual, but which is repeated in a million lives. People feel that they must respond to a given problem and make the decision as an individual, not realising that everybody in their block of flats, out there in the street, sitting opposite them on the train is feeling and doing the same thing. The sum total of all these peoples individual actions come together as a distinct class force. When all these people, in their own private lives are forced to struggle for something as a necessity, class struggle begins. Thus in a way, the working class only really exists when it is forced to come together and struggle. When there is no struggle, when things are running smoothly, then everybody falls apart back into the grooves of their own life process. They become individuals again.

In capitalism there is a tendency to compartmentalise everything from the 'division of labour' to the division between 'Political' and everyday life. Politics is 'out there' to do with experts (Politicians) with its own language. This split leads to the myriads of contradictions in peoples thought. People may be struggling for every penny they earn and hating every minute of their alienating labour but at the same time fall for the "scrourer" line of the politicians about those on SS who don't work in the NATIONAL INTEREST. People may be petty criminals yet would support "law and order". Workers strike while believing strikes are bad for the nation. Blacks vote for Enoch Powell.

In a society where so much is privatized, how can we each know how things affect the person next to us. Communism is about people fulfilling their own needs without getting other people external to their situation to do it for them. It is in the process of direct action that people can turn to the person next to them and discover they feel the same and quickly grasp the real significance of their actions. It is when action is co-opted and taken over by a leader who "deals with" things, councillor, shop steward, party committee etc., etc., that this consciousness is not allowed to arise.

What the libertarians have tried to do is find ways to cut across the divisions of society, both the divisions of person from person, and the divisions between work and home, work for money and housework, workers and non-workers etc, etc, (also the division of our real potential from our created self.) Perhaps, it is true, that this desire went to the extreme pole leaving the point of production a taboo area with too much bad history to be touched. Although we must struggle to get over our fears it is understandable why it has been left alone.

What the straight left has done by concentrating mainly on the politics of the point of production is reiterate the roles which capitalism puts people in. They are defining yet again the working class in the factory, working, rather than as a whole person who exists in other guises outside of work.

As we have said, capitalism is really a trick by which workers only receive a percentage of the worth of what they make. They are thus rationed and merely given what is considered by society in general necessary (this may include colour television if it is accepted to be so.)

The work situation is the place where struggle is most likely, where it is a little easier to recognize that everyone is in the same boat. It is the place where capital is forced to attack people, and where people are in the most powerful position (theoretically) to respond. Production is the key to it all but although it is important, it is not necessarily the only place where one can learn to experience capitalism as it really is.

In some ways it is easy merely to try to increase the 'ration', as work to most people is their means of life and they don't expect it to be anything else. (i.e. they don't expect to enjoy it too much or know all about what is going on there.) In other words because wages, and thus work, are so all-important they are the things people immediately fight around - more wages, the right to work. (The workers tend to forget the fact that this "work" is their own exploitation.) That view of struggle is reflected in the trade union movement which has consistently proved itself hostile to tackling any other injustice but that of not earning proportionately enough or losing one's job. "We are not putting down this struggle to live in our capitalist society, for obviously we need jobs and money to exist.

Libertarians have mainly shied away from working at the point of production (except as CUs in strikes) because of the strong TU, CP tradition in work situations. There has seemed to be no place for the non-authoritarian, anti-sexist, anti-leaders, non-bureaucratic self-organisation ideas of libertarians. As well as the fact that many of us were not working ourselves and we all tended to reject the work ethic. In many ways it is seen that the work place is the place where activity can be 'expected', in men's workplaces anyway. Just look at the miners strikes, they are nearly a yearly event in the calendar now.

There has always been a fear of being forced into the faults of others when organising in a place where there is so much history of Leninist politics. We have mainly rejected intervention in a straight left sense, we have always seen the need to organise from our own situation so that we

couldn't lose sight of our motivations and because we see that every function of human life embodies politics. Our fears perhaps led us to retreat too far and we have not fully worked out how we can transcend this fear and relate to work through a clear critique of capitalist society. We have mouthed ideas about linking work and community but until now this has been mechanistic and thus insignificant. If worked out clearly this link is totally subversive.

In this society people work and then spend and buy. There is a total split between production and consumption. Workers need not even know where what they make goes or where what they buy comes from and who made it or more importantly whether there is a real need to make what they are making. People mostly work somewhere now, not because they want to do that job, but because they need the means to live, money, wages. Work bears no relation to usefulness. Probably only a minority of workers make or do anything that would be necessary in a communist society or even that is really necessary now. In fact a lot of what is done is not only not useful but even dangerous and detrimental to life and a total waste of resources.

This separation of work from the product and the fact that work is the only means to live has meant that the struggle has been seen as control over ones wages and wage labour rather than control over what and how much we make through a knowledge of what we need. In fact the two, consumption and production, are inseparable and should be seen to be. It is only when there is a lack of some commodity that it is clear that production and needs are not linked in this society. What we don't feel we need, can soon be made a need through advertising, the media, thousands of shops etc. Consumption as the link between work and home; rent, fares, food, clothing heating, etc. Also there is the effect work has on your life at home, how it infiltrates into your 'private life.' The strenuousness, the tedium, the length of time spent at work has its effect on peoples relationships. The constant danger to health and body which could mean that you can have no life outside. Then there is pollution created by production and the senseless waste of resources used up in the vast units demanded by the capitalist system.

As long as the wage side of work is allowed to be seen as the pivot of the struggle to 'overthrow' capitalism then so many human problems go unseen and the splits of capitalism will continue. Women will not be an integrated part of the struggle, racism won't be tackled except of course when it happens to coincide with the quest for higher wages. If we really believe that politics is in every part of our lives, then we must understand how the needs of production design all our lives.

Capitalism can never be 'fair'. It depends on too much inequality and divisiveness. If it could then more equal distribution, more wages, better conditions of work can be adequate demands to raise the whole quality of our life. But if we know it can't be fair we have to look to see the ways in which we allow such inequality to go on. We must examine every minute of our lives to see what we do to maintain a system which is so alien to our instincts and try and define our real needs and feel what our frustrations are, where they spring from and more importantly how they manifest themselves.

Our needs and dreams are felt somewhere within us but it is hard to pin them down. People work for money and money becomes the key to our desires. Work becomes the only social reality and without a job you are almost without identity. Some of us have felt it hard to be an eternal claimant for similar reasons. But beneath the ambition, the desire for approval and success through 'work' our desires are simple and emotional. We want health happiness, love, friendship. Why we are not happy is just as relevant as why we are not rich. "You can't buy Love."

Capitalism doesn't allow you to deal with your desires, once found, in your own way. At the same time though, as we have said, people pride themselves on the feeling that they are free to choose. Men have to want 36-24-36 flondes and dominating sexual gratification and in order to get back some feeling of SELF they must be superior, strong, unemotional, COOL. Women have to find a place for themselves in a world of production where they MATTER. So they are allowed to be needed by being weak and submissive, beautiful when painted, dieted and dressed up and by being good cooks and MOTHERS. In short a complement to the male ego. (This is not to say that we all succeed in our roles.)

Libertarians have fought sexism, seeing it as a mode of control which we can exert on one another. It is obviously one of the ways peoples potential is limited. The phrase 'policeman in your head' is all too true. As long as men oppress women to regain some semblance of the power taken away from them all day at work and women take pride in their submission in order to be a 'good wife' then capitalism will remain in control.

Capitalism is able to keep us powerless in so many ways. It gives us the semblance of power in the form of sexism and competition in general and petty authority in the hierarchy of jobs. (There's always someone worse off). We are all small reflections of our true potential as there is no space in capitalism for us to take any real control (only the mock control of participation). As everything gets bigger and more and more centralized and computerized, our ability to satisfy our own needs and desires gets smaller and smaller and our power shrinks (windmills are easy to comprehend nuclear reactors are most complex). As we get further from being able to deal with everyday life, as things get too complex and alienating, so the realising of needs are harder to consider.

What libertarians have tried to do is to make struggle a part of everyday life without a special 'political' face. We have tried to work from our own situation and to break down the mystification surrounding the capitalist solution of ones own problems. In a world of professionals, experts in every field from POLITICS to DOCTORS to TEACHERS to CIVIL SERVANTS to PARENTS it is hard to find your own abilities again.

As Capitalism can in real terms provide us with less and less we must learn more and more to do things for ourselves. We must challenge our own created ignorance and powerlessness.

Health groups, womens groups, squatting, sexual politics, claimants unions, food co-ops, community presses, community facilities, collective childcare, all of these are part of demystifying what are taken as 'facts of life'. We want to be part of the new learning process. The breaking down of the classic learning process of YES/NO, CAN/CAN'T, authority. The council does NOT HAVE TO BE respected, it isn't the only way to be housed. Social Workers DON'T hold the key to our safety and schools are NOT the place of education. Doctors do NOT NECESSARILY know more about our own bodies or hold the answer to our problems. Police are NOT guardians of the people and the law is NOT just and only to be fought for in wigs and gowns in Latin. Newspapers are NOT things that come out of shops full of truth. Marriage and the parent family is not the ONLY way to live and raise children and we don't have to PUT UP WITH IT or MAKE THE BEST OF the continual fights and isolation it brings.

It is only when we can understand what we are capable of that the fear of the unknown disappears and we feel the real possibility of fighting for what we know we can attain in a situation where our lives are under attack. How could we run our lives without all the experts? Well with the present tiny ratio of imparted knowledge it does seem a bit impossible. We are allowed to revel in "Tomorrows World" on tele where we can see all the wonders of modern technology but we are never shown how possible it would be to be self sufficient in our own areas or homes using the useful

discoveries of science. We are not taught the rudiments of staying alive at school, everything is taught in the most alienated form. We learn about Archimedes in isolation but we don't learn about soil and gardening, about health and medicine, how to make useful objects. We are taught everything in terms of facts. There is no delving into the substance and development of these facts.

This is the importance of radical technology and science groups, radical health groups and mental health groups, radical education groups, public printing facilities and the dissemination of practical knowledge generally.

Obviously the practical side of things is not everything but without the tools the imagination can't conceive of building a new order. We also have to understand that things are no facts of life but can be changed in the same way as they developed (like hierarchy, male domination, money and many other things.)

We have written this to try and validate some forms of practise we have been into. There is always a tendency to look at the libertarians and see them as ineffective and not GROWING. But a lot of this dissatisfaction comes from the view of history we are given. In history we are taught that progress happened because of leaders, because of the actions of large organised groups important at any time. History never mentions the everyday the way consciousness really grew and grows and so we tend to evaluate ourselves in relation to the world using the same method as the history books and this is one reason we become dissatisfied.

Our task is not to construct the perfect lever to overturn a monolith. We are rather faced with an ongoing process which we must integrate ourselves with and accelerate. We are beginning to realise that ideology is not the prime mover and we do not feel it crucial to develop a convincing set of ideas with which to go in to 'convert' people.

Revolutionaries can never make things happen. (History, however, has shown how they can stop things happening by imposing their ideology or by building up precarious leadership situations which never taught anyone anything but disillusion.) It seems we can but inject new aspects of struggle into existing ones. In our everyday life we react to things that happen around us and like other people do what we think is right. We find ways in these situations whether it be at work, say as a teacher or at home as squatters or 'parents' to bring out the political nature of everything. We can expose the contradictions in situations and prove that things are not just LIKE THAT but that they are an integral part of the society we live in.

When we meet other people who are involved in struggle either as individuals or as groups we can be of support and in a way service those struggles and give a sense of importance to them. We can encourage those struggling collectively to see what their action means in relation to their own lives and to each other as people who previously were isolated, powerless individuals.

The way we organise ourselves as people who have similar ideas cannot be talked about in isolation from looking at what our everyday practise is, and what its aims are. It seems strange to think that we had a conference on organisation before on what was the basis on which 'we' were together. No wonder some of us felt so threatened under a situation of such urgency.

When we have come up against the discussion of ORGANISATION we have tended to put ourselves down for being ineffective and disorganised but look at what we have got together in Islington. We've kept a press going and a paper for 2 years. We've squatted and worked at our living situations and relationships in a consistent way for over 2 years. We've consistently raised the question of housing to the front pages of the local paper through our actions. We've opened and maintained a women centre along with many

other women for a year. And we've gained recognition and trust from many people in the area. This is not to mention the many struggles we as individuals are involved in.

Somehow, though, people insist on being able to 'quantify' their power. They almost want to be able to look at their books and see how many people there are or how many struggles they've initiated. Obviously a definite structure and organisation provides this possibility but it doesn't necessarily mean much. People have not historically fought for grand ideals directly but around specific demands. Far from direct anger flowing from their everyday life. Do we need a complicated blanket structure people can join? We must learn to see every little uprising as proof of our belief that struggle grows organically out of your own situation and fades or stays and grows depending on the situation existing at the time.

We who call ourselves libertarians on the other hand can make many decisions; we can move around, we can squat, we can work or not work, not marry; look after kids collectively, but this is because we have worked out our lives to be that way as part of a long perspective. But we are unusual. For most people change is a leap into the unknown that people are not education to take and which is only taken in a situation too intolerable to do otherwise and where all else has failed.

It is depressing to see how conservative most 'revolutionaries' are. Somehow they think revolution consists of smashing capitalism and replacing it with socialism which will automatically make things better for all, iron out the inequalities. But in their analysis they still think in terms of many of the institutions of the former society, like money, power, centralisation, alienated work (only in the transitional stage, of course.) That is why we have tried to stress that a study of the historical role and development of such institutions is an important step to being able to conceive of their disappearance. To be communist requires imagination in a society as stultifying as ours, full of 'facts of life' and compensations. We think that most people have that imagination but they are told to consider it as utopian fantasy.

We must try and work to realise the fantasy here and now to show it is no fantasy but a real possibility.

Joan and Tony.

IS RUSSIA CAPITALIST?

INTRODUCTION - The following is a response from an individual member of the Socialist Party of Great Britain to Stefan's article on State Capitalism in Libertarian Communism No. 7 (a few copies of which are still available). We do in fact agree with much of what is said and don't feel that it was at all contradicted in Stefan's article which we feel Charmain has in part misinterpreted.

Since Libertarian Communism is apparently a discussion journal I should like to comment on Stefan's notes on Russian Society and State Capitalism. I would first like to query the term Russian Society: what is meant by this? Is Stefan referring to all the Soviet Union or only to Russia itself? Is he accepting the old Russian mystique of the Spirit of the Slave, the uniqueness of Holy Rus?

There are also other phrases he uses which seem to me unhelpful in understanding Russia as part of the world capitalist system: such as 'the central political bureaucracy', 'bureaucratic relations of production', and 'a new

non-capitalist form of class society, with a managerial or bureaucratic ruling class.' More of this later.

But before we start attaching labels to whatever goes on in Russia, let us start by answering a few questions. In the first place, what is capitalism? The Marxist answer is that capitalism is a mode of production: not so much the political and institutional superstructure, as the underlying reality. It is the way we combine to produce and distribute wealth which determines the characteristics of our social institutions, generally speaking. Basically the capitalist mode of production is characterized by two key factors: (1) production is for profit - goods are made as commodities, for their exchange-value not their use-value; and (2) surplus-value is extracted from the producers of wealth by the wage-labour system (cf. serfdom, chattel slavery, the corvée etc.)

When we look at Russia, there can be no doubt that the 2nd factor - wage-labour - is obviously as much in evidence there as in any other country in the world. It is perhaps useful to compare the situation in a 'mixed' economy like Britain: wage-workers here are just as much part of the working class when they work for the State-owned enterprises as when they work for private enterprise. Returning to Russia, we know that from time to time some racketeer starts up a factory and runs it, illegally, as a private concern although masquerading as a State or cooperative concern. From the workers's point of view, they are exploited in the same way by State as by private enterprise. The workers in such private concerns are employed at similar wages, producing similar commodities and surplus value, just like their brothers in State factories.

But what of the first key factor, the production of commodities? Anyone who has lived in Russia, for however short a time, is aware that just as here goods and services are only produced as commodities. You are hungry, there is bread, but unless you have money, you stay hungry. Similarly with everything else you need. You pay rent for a flat, you pay fares on the trolley-bus or Metro, and if you are a housewife you shop around for bargains and special offers. Although in some areas the State makes things available free or nearly so, as with Britain's welfare services they must be seen as a subsidy which enables capital to pay less money-wages by making some payments in kind.

Also when we look at the work of a Sovkhoz or Kolkhoz, a factory, mine or chemical plant, or whatever, we find that management is desperately anxious to create more and yet more surplus-value, whether by management we understand a remote planning official or the men actually on the spot.

The mode of production - factory work, conveyor-belts, the mechanization of farming, use of fertilizers to maximize productivity, the industrial division of labour etc. - is dictated by the need to make capital breed still more capital, by the production of surplus-value. Wage-workers in Russia produce surplus-value in the same way as those in this country: they are paid wages which are based on the value of their labour-power, they produce collectively more than they consume, and the difference between the value of their labour-power and the value of their product, which Marx called surplus-value, is consumed partly by the management, partly by the State (police, military, welfare etc.) and is partly re-invested as capital. This happens just as much when 'the State' controls capital as when multinational corporations or mammoth trusts perform the same role.

What do we mean when we talk of the State controlling capital? Some would argue that as in the West the State in Russia is the capitalist class's executive, or that the State is the capitalist class organized as a collective.

The capitalist class, of course, has evolved in the West from the early one-man show (e.g. in Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger) through partnerships and family firms (The Forsytes, for instance). As their capital grew, their

personal control of the business diminished; they hired managers to deal with first a few and finally all managerial functions, till already in Marx's time, the capitalist (owner of capital) was superfluous and redundant, all his useful functions being undertaken by paid employees. Nevertheless, if the owners of capital decide to, they can fire these paid managers, even the managing director, unless he owns a controlling interest. ("No one is indispensable".) Ultimate control remains in the hands of the owners. Although the individual shareholder may well have little or no control over his capital, once it is invested, because he has joined forces with big capital controlling groups, he shares in the capitalist class's collective control of capital. This control is also exercised in the political sphere, by capital's influence over politicians and civil servants.

Returning to the Russian scene, we find day-to-day running of businesses undertaken as in this country by professional managers, the salaried employees of the State, the owner. But who is "the State"? Who owns the State's enterprises, the State capital? Who controls investment of State capital? These are some of the questions Stefan has not attempted to ask. I believe they are nearly always asked.

In the first place, as in the West, whichever political party rules the country can control State-owned enterprises. In the West, the major political parties bow to the interest of the capitalist class, even when pretending to be Labour or "Socialist". (It was under Wilson's government that a large number of coal mines were closed down as "uneconomic", and under Atlee the British capitalist class embarked on an unprecedented, for peacetime, programme of armament expenditure.) But in Russia, we are told, there are no individual capitalists and therefore there can be no capitalist class. Hence, by Bolshevik logic, we are told that since the Politburo, the Central Committee and the Party are elected by "the people", this means that the national capital is controlled by "the people".

Let us consider a few relevant facts here. Fact no. 1: a very small minority of "the people" can actually become members of the Party - the vast majority cannot. Fact no. 2: it is virtually impossible to become a manager or obtain any high-ranking job without a Party card, and if a man is expelled from the Party, he will automatically become liable to expulsion from his job, merely for his non-membership of the Party. Fact no. 3: the result of this is that the Party has become the institution of capital control in Russia. Fact no. 4: Party membership and elite jobs, with super salaries, prizes and perks, combine to produce exceptionally high living standards relative to the living standards of the rest of the Russian people (CF. 'Socialist Standard' Jan. '75). Thus the Party membership card identifies a super surplus-value eater.

Now is the Party a "caste" as per Trotskyist theory, or is it a class? The Socialist answer can only be that it is a class, since it comprises a section of society defined by a particular relationship to the means of producing and distributing wealth. (Caste cannot be defined in this way: cf. Capital vol 1.) In this case, although ownership of capital is apparently a State monopoly, control of capital is definitely theirs. While they can do without legal personal ownership of mines and factories etc. (constant capital), they control the national capital as a collective, just as the Papal hierarchy controls the Catholic Church's capital. Also they have compensated for non-ownership by rather greater control of labour.

In Russia we find a wage slave working class, which has to sell its labour-power in order to live since it does not own or control the means of producing wealth. We also find a minority class which, by virtue of its political control of the State, also controls the State capital. Does this class constitute a "capitalist class"? Stefan tells us: "The rulers of Russia do not by themselves constitute a 'Russian capitalist class', since this implies capitalist relations among themselves. But collectively they are a part of the world capitalist class."

However, if these Russian rulers are "a part of the world capitalist class", it is impossible to deny that they constitute the Russian section of the capitalist class, which is merely another way of saying a "Russian capitalist class". But Stefan declares that they cannot be that "since this implies capitalist relations among themselves". He does not say what sort of relations he has in mind. Probably he means that they are not competitive. Let us try to clear the air by citing what goes on nearer home. In any local authority, each department fights ferociously for more finance - housing vs. social services, roads vs. education, and so on; yet all departments unite against a common foe - such as another local authority or perhaps a Government department. There is a similar situation in Government and the Civil Service. Likewise in large companies where there is both competition and cooperation. Look at the big capitalists in this country: In prosperous times it's a case of "Dog eat dog". Yet in bad times, when Labour looms up with nasty nationalization, or when foreign firms flood the home market with cheaper commodities, look how hard they try to cooperate. And never more effectively, perhaps, than when they close ranks against the workers.

Now let us look at the Russian Partocracy and see whether they have similar internal capitalist relations. Are they competitive in struggling for more capital investment, in selling their products as profitably as possible, given the various legalistic impediments (of, planning regulations, price codes etc.), in buying labour-power, raw materials and other means of production or distribution as cheaply as possible? Of course they are. Are they competitive in the production of surplus value, either by lengthening the working day or by increasing productivity of labour (e.g. Stakhanovism or the competition between the various farming units in a region)? Yes in general they are: this is what management in Russia is all about - there are even incentives for "efficient" managers, usually money prizes. If they are not competing against each other, then they join forces and compete together against the Chinese or the Americans.

So it seems that the rulers of Russia do constitute a part of the capitalist class zealously competing to accumulate collectively more and yet more capital, by more and more effective exploitation of their section of the world working class. But Stefan, having denied that they are a "Russian capitalist class", goes on to stick on the label of "a managerial or bureaucratic ruling class", also "a new non-capitalist form of class society". We are given the idea that those who put forward these concepts are "obsessed with bureaucratic relationships (order givers and order takers)", from which we must assume that this is a superficial, sociological rather than economic, theory, dealing with the political and institutional superstructure rather than with the actual mode of production which is what ultimately determines the superstructure.

Since I think all these groups would agree that the capitalist mode of production is dominant in the world today, the onus is on them (and on Stefan) to explain just what sort of "new non-capitalist form of class society" they think has evolved in Russia. Even in terms of the superstructure ideology, laws, institutions, morality, the family etc.), Russia is amazingly similar to Western capitalist countries. For instance, while Russia has the K.G.B., the USA has the CIA and the FBI, South Africa has BOSS, Britain has the Special Branch etc. The family in Russia is almost exactly like the family in any European country. What of morality? Double standards there, same as here. Or compare the art of Nazi Germany and that of Stalinist Russia. We could go on, but it would be boring.

Stefan proposes a "synthesis" of the view of Russia as (state) capitalist and the other view of Russia as "a new non-capitalist form of class society". But in order to get us to accept such an improbable and sterile hybrid he will have to demonstrate:-

- that there has been an evolution of capitalism in Russia into a new form of capitalism ("a special new type of capitalism - State capitalism"), i.e. that there has been a qualitative change, not merely the sort of quantitative changes which have been taking place all over the capitalist world, where big fish are constantly becoming bigger, but never turning into whales;

- also that "bureaucratic society" is not characterized by the same key factors as capitalism, such as commodity production, wage-labour, and the accumulation of capital.

He has not done this so far. His notes must be seen merely as a build-up for his scare-story, warning us all of the danger or "the Statists" coming to power and introducing a "Bolshevik or fascist regime". In these crude and superficial phrases, he shows how little he has understood of Marxist socialism. The factors which cause some countries to shudder under dictatorships while others maintain relatively "democratic" regimes are to be found ultimately in the economic conditions in the various countries, rather than in their political superstructure. The materialist conception of history is the key to this question.

Stefan's conclusions still remain unclear. Apparently we are to synthesize two views: one view says Russia is a special form of capitalism, the other says that it is a non-capitalist society. But these two views are obviously not reconcilable. He also says that in Britain the Statists "aim to oust the private capitalists" (my heart bleeds, I don't think), that the "Statists are the main enemy of Socialism" (and I always thought we had enough to do just fighting to get rid of capitalism), and that if they are not prevented from coming to power there will be dire consequences. The logic of these arguments might well lead the reader to vote Tory to keep Labour out. Was this intended? The aim seems to be to confuse and mystify people rather than to discover and express a coherent view which fits the facts and therefore can be readily understood. Such mystification can only serve the ends of King Capital, it is less than useful to the working class.

C. Skelton.

"When the socialists in the Russian government, after the victory over tsarism, imagined that a phase of historical development could be skipped and socialism structurally realised, they had forgotten the ABC of Marxist knowledge according to which socialism can only be the outcome of an organic development that has capitalism developed to the limits of its maturity as its indispensable presupposition. They had to pay for this forgetfulness by a wide, troublesome and victim-strewn detour which brings them in a space of time to capitalism.

To institute capitalism and to organise the bourgeois state is the historical function of the bourgeois revolution. The Russian Revolution was and is a bourgeois revolution, no more and no less: the strong socialist admixture changes nothing in this essence. So it will fulfil its task by throwing away, the last remnants of its 'War-Communism' and revealing the face of a real, genuine capitalism. The struggles within the Bolshevik party are preparing this conclusion, and with it the end of the Bolshevik party dictatorship. The line of development - whether that of a party coalition which hastens and alleviates the launching phase of capitalism, or that of a Bonaparte who protracts and aggravates it - is not yet clear; both are possible."

Otto Ruhle "From the Bourgeois to the Proletarian Revolution"
1924 - published by Socialist Reproduction. Price 40p.

"MEN AGAINST SEXISM"

EDITORIAL NOTE : Apologies for the late publication of this article which refers to the last London conference of "Men Against Sexism" and not to the more recent conference in Brighton, (which we would also welcome comment upon).

One of the results of the growth of the Womens Liberation Movement has been the appearance of men's groups which sympathise with its aims. In many cases these groups were formed by men who were under pressure to change themselves from "their" women in the WLM; even where groups formed independently the ideas are taken over wholesale from the womens movement. Just as in the WLM, a single umbrella covers a variety of conflicting approaches.

The conference in London on 16-17th November 1974, with between 100-150 men present, was the third. I, and quite a few others, had not been involved before, and my reaction was mixed and confused.

The men's movement had partly originated from the groups of men who ran creches at WL conferences. We had a creche at the Childrens Community Centre, which was lucky because the Centre had not been informed in advance due to muddled organisation. The creche was under-used, with only 7 or 8 children, and at times more men than children (why?). I stayed to help til mid afternoon on the Saturday and enjoyed being with the kids, certainly more than being with the men. Like many men (and women), I don't normally get to be with children, while those, mainly women, whose job it is to look after kids in this society's dehumanising division of labour - in home, nursery, school - are deprived of any enjoyment by scarcely ever getting a letup. If the conference had had a chance of getting down to discussing anything practical, it would have been a good idea to investigate how to organise some mutual aid in this area.

A van ferried helpers between the hall and the creche. When I came into the conference everyone was sitting round in circles (workshops). People were talking very quietly, often it seemed to those sitting next to them or even to themselves, and it was hard to catch what was said in the hubbub.

The first group I sat in was talking about the health work of the Islington group, which is trying to involve men in what is felt to be a women's field. They are working on the sort of medical self-help pioneered by women's health groups - studying their bodies, illnesses, sexuality to gain some independence from the medical establishment, which is dominated by elitist and sexist values. In another workshop, men were discussing their experience in giving talks to schoolboys; they had been invited by teachers in the WLM.

Both of these projects are worth expanding, but it was disappointing that other practical problems were not discussed, for example:
- how to fight sexism at work and in education, and how to integrate opposition to sexism with other struggles;
- how to connect up anti-sexism with wider aims such as social revolution.

- how to put over our ideas effectively in opposition to the mass media
- how to in practice resist sexism in personal relations with people, men and women, who accept it as natural.

I think that this failure is due to the guilt felt by many of the men, especially over their oppression of women in the past. They seemed more concerned to prove to one another, and to the women's movement, that they really were sincere, than to fight sexism for its own sake. "We must remember that we are on probation with the women's movement, who regard us with suspicion" said one brother. As we sat pondering our experiences and feelings in a way most men rarely do (consciousness raising!), I learned quite a lot, but it seemed an end in itself. Men had met in closed isolated groups (at present, in London, there are no men's groups open to new members!) and agonised together over long periods, and then were disillusioned that they were changing so little. Though self-criticism has its place in social change, there is nothing effective or progressive in self-condemnation; religion has been at it for thousands of years. There's a similarity between the "what shits we men are" attitude of some men and the doctrine of original sin.

The atmosphere was much more personal and friendly than you'd expect in a large gathering of men - though one gay man said he felt the atmosphere was frigid, which shows something of what gays must feel among more sexist men. We tried to avoid disguising personal statements in impersonal verbiage, and challenged one another when we did. But this was at the cost of making any social analysis - we are still a long way from the necessary combination of the personal with the theoretical.

There was a conflict at the conference which developed into a confrontation in the final full session on Sunday, bringing into the open the differences we had been suppressing. Soon after I came into the hall on Saturday afternoon, a man stood on a chair, announced that there was a women washing up in the kitchen and that we should be discussed with ourselves, and sat down again. Vegetarian lunch had been provided by a volunteer health-food collective containing both men and women.

I was annoyed - why didn't he just ask for volunteers, nobody would have refused? Were we all supposed to mill around in the kitchen asking to wash up? And he wasn't washing up either. My neighbour grinned - "He's just trying to put us down." A group of "militant" gays had come to the conference, convinced (I think) in advance that it would be a liberal fraud. Apparently some men, who had had little previous experience with gay people, had made remarks which they construed as sexist. They had retaliated by setting up a gays-only workshop, which created some bad feeling. In the final session, it it looked as if they were trying to prevent discussion of future arrangements by filibuster, only being silenced by another gay man who was more tolerant of and patient with heterosexual men.

I'll try to sort out four different trends of ideas which came up - maybe two would do, and maybe any classification distorts the fluid situation. I'll label them for convenience, with their approximate response to the question "Do men oppress women?" And also, "Do straight men oppress gay men?" -

1. Gayist - Yes.
2. Ingratiationist - Yes, OK, but can't you see we're trying not to?
3. Men's liberationist - Yes, but sometimes women also oppress men; men and women are all (equally?) oppressed by the roles imposed on them by society.
4. Balanced - The question is wrong; it's more complicated than that.

1. The "militant gays" were interested in Men Against Sexism because the Gay Liberation Movement had collapsed and they had nowhere else to go. To them, reality was crystal clear - straight men were the people who exploited women and beat up gays, and threw them out of jobs and flats. Even to mention the possibility that men were also oppressed by their roles (at work, in the family, in sexual relations, or in war), or to explain the oppression of women as being by society or the ruling class, was for them a cop-out from men's responsibility for being oppressors of women. They believed that the men's movement was a sexist ploy to deflect and confuse the women's movement. They were also separatists, and advocated that we all become gay to avoid oppressing women so much (with or without the agreement of heterosexual women was not clear). Thus the term gayist. Others of us questioned whether avoiding close relations with women amounted to fighting sexism, and pointed out that the women in the Gay movement had left because they regarded the gay men as sexist. Though their attitudes reflected the terrible suffering they had undergone, they were also using their homosexuality to be "more anti-sexist than thou".

2. Many straight men were very much on the defensive before the relentless verbal attacks of the gayists, intimidated even. "There are a lot of pigs here" - "Yes, but we're a little less piggish than we were; don't dismiss us as hopeless" was repeated many times in different words. Except on the point of separatism, the "ingratiat-ionists" accepted the simplistic analysis of the gayists, but pleaded to be given a chance to reform.

3. In contrast, a few men completely rejected the "men oppress women" explanation (I stand to be corrected here if I misunderstand). Don't men have their own special oppression - as coal-miners, soldiers, sexual initiators, breadwinners and so on? "I'm in a position where I have to support a family who no longer love me. Aren't I oppressed?" said one. Esther Vilar wrote a book, not completely serious, in which she explains sexism as an organised oppression of men by women - not that any "men's liberationists" go that far. But there is a clear difference, at least of emphasis, between those who focus on men as oppressors (the anti-sexists) and those who focus on men as oppressed by society (the "men's liberationists"). In this country the choice of the name Men Against Sexism, instead of Men's Liberation Movement, marked the (temporary?) defeat of men's liberation, while in the USA there are two separate and hostile movements. But this category of men who, due to personal experience which they falsely generalise to apply to everyone (as we all tend to do), feel wronged rather than wrongdoers, was very small and isolated.

4. The men I have discussed are people who are basically talking about their own lives - a good thing, of course, but to understand and change the world we have to integrate the experience of many people into a social analysis. Those, like me, who thought in terms of more general social ideas, tried to take a more balanced view which recognised everyone's experience, as valid and also as limited. We should have perhaps put our views more forcefully, but we were there partly because we felt the inadequacy of highly impersonal "theory". As we still find it difficult to combine theory with practice, we were inhibited from trying to put the discussion into a broader perspective.

I'll now put over my own views. The idea of oppression is useful but vague; we should try to clarify what we mean by it, and make it refer firstly to the social organisation of capitalist society, and only .

secondly to the resulting oppression of and by individuals. I'm sure there is truth in all such statements as - "Men as a group oppress women as a group"; "In individual cases, men can oppress women and women men"; "We are all oppressed by the social roles imposed on us"; "The working class, men and women, is oppressed and exploited by the capitalist class".

Such explanations only seem to contradict one another because reality is more involved than the words we use to discuss it. For example, a worker who, as a man, or teacher, or social worker, or foreman, or policeman, oppresses other workers, is also oppressed by those above him/her in the hierarchical organisation of the working class and by the employers. In fact, the employing class hire the "oppressing workers" in order to do the particular job of oppression for them. And oppression is a dirty and dehumanising job to do, and many people know it - having to oppress others for the boss in order to survive is itself an oppression. Men must fight sexism in themselves not only because otherwise neither men nor women can be freed from class society, but because a sexist character structure makes it impossible for men to resist their own oppressors now. The same masculinity which makes the factory worker beat up his wife from jealousy, makes him neglect the struggle for health and safety at work as old-womanish. The same masculinity which makes the American soldier in Vietnam rape and kill peasant women, gets him maimed or slaughtered in battle.

As in any conference, the most informative talks were those outside the official sessions, but for reasons of space I won't report on them. One final point is that in any future meetings women should be admitted - as one brother told me his wife had said - "You're all going to talk about relations with women, with no woman there to defend us!"

Stephen Stefan.

Note: See also on this, two articles in 'Solidarity' Vol 8, No 1, article entitled "Jealousy" from a back issue of 'Spare Rib' and "The Socialised Penis" by Jack Litawka, a 'Rising Free' reprint.

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i) clearly sees the necessity for replacing the existing capitalist society with a new society of production for need where there will be no money or wages system, no repressive state or national frontiers

ii) even though conditions may be unfavourable for a speedy achievement of such a socialist society continues to relate its activity in a meaningful and urgent sense towards this end

To say this is bound to wreck quite a number of peoples' jealously guarded illusions about a country such as Japan. In an essay on Pannekoek and Bordiga, Jean Barrot once wrote that: "They are products of the best elements in the revolutionary wave in Europe after the first world war. Surely there must be similar militants in other parts of the world, at least in the highly developed countries - in Japan, for instance. It would be instructive to investigate this." (Eclipse and Reemergence of the Communist Movement, Barrot and Martin, Slack and Red Detroit, 1974.) I am not trying to score points off Barrot but the fact is that when one does look into this claim that Japan too must have produced its Pannekoeks and Bordigas, the results are a good deal more 'instructive' than he suspects. The whole point about men like Pannekoek and Bordiga, the source of all their strength which enabled them to unflinchingly recognise from an early date that it was capitalism which was being built by the bolsheviks in Russia and which gave them the courage to stand up to the big battalions of the IIIrd International, was their understanding of communist theory which they had painstakingly acquired by long years of revolutionary activity linked with an independently spirited study of - not exclusively but above all else - Marx's works. True Japan too experienced a wave of radicalisation in the period following the 1st world war but there was unfortunately no one here capable of fulfilling the role of those such as Pannekoek and Bordiga in Europe.

The person who perhaps came nearest to doing so was an anarchist called Osugi Sakae, for before he was murdered by the military police in 1923 Osugi certainly did refer on more than one occasion to the society which was emerging in Russia as state capitalism where the working class remained slaves to the wages system. In general, however, Osugi was unable to progress any further in his criticism of bolshevik Russia on the one hand and in his appreciation of what it would take to overthrow capitalism as a world system on the other than the level represented in Europe by anarcho-communists such as Alexander Berkman. Indeed some of his best criticisms of bolshevik policy were virtually literal translations of what Berkman (and to a lesser extent Emma Goldman) had written about Russia during and after their visit there. Osugi never read Marx's Capital (I have checked this with the few surviving militants who knew and worked with Osugi) and, although he seems to have been aware of the existence of organisations in Europe such as the German Communist Workers Party (KAPD) in which Pannekoek was active, there is nothing in his writings to show that he was significantly influenced by them.

Apart from anarchists such as Osugi, there was another group of militants in the period immediately following the 1st world war who - in a European milieu - might possibly have progressed to a revolutionary position. Their names (Yamakawa Hitoshi, Sakai Toshihiko and Arakata Kanson were the most prominent among them) are not well known in the West but they were a loosely knit grouping which initially cooperated in the formation of the Japanese 'Communist' Party (JCP) only to break away soon afterwards. From 1927 onwards they developed their ideas in a magazine called Rono (Worker-Peasant) and hence became known as the Worker-Peasant Group. Together with a section of the anarchist movement, the Worker-Peasant Group probably deserve to be known as the best elements within the pre-war Japanese working class but we can get a good idea of what a sorry 'best' it was by looking at the polemic with the JCP and its supporters which the group engaged in. Perhaps the most significant thing about this polemic is to make clear what it did not touch on. There was no correct grasp on either side of what a socialist society entailed and hence no critical analysis of the society which was being fostered by first Lenin and then Stalin in Russia. Both parties to the dispute were agreed that Russia was on the path to socialism and the Worker-Peasant Group's criticism of the Comintern went no further than what they considered to be the mistaken strategy it sought to impose on Japan's fledgling bolsheviks. The Russian government's New Economic Policy of 1921 was always regarded by the WPG as evidence of "Lenin's genius" and even when some of its members translated and published Trotsky's Revolution Betrayed in 1938 they only did so because they considered that the Japanese public ought to have the chance to read for themselves what Trotsky had to say and were careful to disassociate themselves from his criticisms of Stalin. In fact, this attitude towards Trotsky is really all that is needed to answer Jean Barrot's claims. In his article Barrot contrasted Pannekoek and Bordiga with Trotsky and showed how they were qualitatively different from the bolshevik leader. Put in a nutshell they were communists while he was not. What speaks volumes about the situation in Japan, however, is that not only was there no one comparable to Pannekoek and Bordiga but that there were not even any trotskyists. In contrast to the situation in Europe, a bunch of supposedly 'independent marxists' such as the WPG could not even advance to the primitive level of consciousness represented by trotskyism, let alone go beyond it.

So far we have talked only about pre-war conditions but it is important to realise that this state of affairs has not changed significantly even since the war. Following the Hungarian uprising of 1956, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin in the same year and the sorry performance put up by the established left-wing parties in the disturbances which accompanied the Japanese government's signing of a security treaty with the USA in 1960, a so-called 'new left' did indeed emerge in Japan in the late fifties and early sixties. But, given the composition of this movement and the events which had brought it into life, there was never a chance that it would take on a revolutionary socialist character. Countries such as America also experienced the emergence of this so-called 'new left' at about the same period but this use of the same terminology should not be allowed to obscure some very big differences between the two movements. It is only too easy to criticise the much publicised American 'new left' of a few years ago but at least it can be given credit for including elements which were genuinely searching for alternatives to reformist social-democracy and infantile bolshevism - whether any of them succeeded or not is a different question. At least these healthiest elements within the American 'new left' had no illusions about trotskyist organisations like the 'Socialist Workers Party' and understood that their muddled recipes for state capitalism were totally irrelevant to the struggle for socialist revolution. On the other hand, one of the most pathetic aspects of the Japanese 'new left' was the glee with which it discovered trotskyism. The very first trotskyist grouplet to be formed in Japan was the Japanese Trotskyist League which was founded in 1957 and even today trotskyism and the pre-stalinist variety of bolshevism retain their glamour as something tremendously new and exciting - the last word in revolutionary marxism!!

I think it is important that we revolutionaries in the West clearly recognise this situation as it exists in Japan and draw the necessary conclusions from it, something we certainly have not done up till now. Language is a formidable barrier, of course, and the sheer distances separating Japan from the other advanced, industrialised countries make it easy to get the wrong idea about what is going on here. Yet these factors alone are not enough to account for the mistakes which have been made in assessing conditions here. Barrot's attitude of 'Japan is a highly industrialised country so there must be revolutionary communists there too' seems to me to be all too common. Unfortunately I do not have any of the Situationists' pamphlets with me at present but I seem to remember that in a footnote to one of them (it might have been The Poverty of Student Life) they had some very flattering things to say about an organisation here known as the 'Revolutionary Communist League' (RCL). This was all the more striking because the Situationists have never been known for the generosity of their criticisms (what was it they said about Pannkoek? - a 'defunct theoretician up for grabs at bargain prices!!'). In fact, there is nothing either revolutionary or communist about the RCL, since all along it has been the very type of antique bolshevik group which (in the West) has come in for the Situationists' pitiless criticism. To give some idea of the sort of counter-revolutionary role it plays, it is sufficient to mention here that in recent years it has split into two rival factions whose main activity has since consisted of attempting to physically wipe each other out. So far several dozen people from the two rival factions have been murdered in this half-witted charade, the favourite method being for a group armed with iron bars from one side to lie in wait for and ambush a single member of the opposing camp and to then proceed to beat him to death. Needless to say, the theoretical level of the polemic which serves as an accompaniment to this dance of death can only be described as abysmal.

As we can see, then, the allegedly 'new' left in Japan was crippled right from the start by its identification of marxism with bolshevism. The pitiful thing is, though, that it is not only those who claim to be 'marxists' who make this mistake but those opposed to 'marxism' too. In an article in Libertarian Communism 6 Stephen Stefan pointed out that "distrust between 'marxism' and 'anarchism' in the libertarian socialist movement is now an obsolete irrelevance", which is true as far as it goes although I would reject Stephen's implication that it ever was relevant. (Surely it is enough simply to remember that there were defenders of commodity production - Proudhon, numerous social democrats, Bakunin etc. - and those committed to free distribution of products and the abolition of the wages system - Marx, Kropotkin, Engels etc. - ranged indiscriminately on the two sides to see that the polarisation which took place never was over the issues that are of central importance for the working class.) This division between anarchism and marxism is certainly something we need to transcend by developing our theory, for if we don't the situation in Japan offers an excellent example of the sort of impasse it can lead to.

Given the fact that the bolsheviks of the 'new left' can be written off as far as the struggle for a communist society is concerned, it is a section of the anarchist movement here which takes the laurels as representing the best elements within the post-war working class. Now, an important development that has been taking place within this section of the anarchist movement over the past few years has been an awakening of interest in the ideas of currents such as the Councilists and Situationists. One of the best journals they are producing is a magazine called Anarchism and recent issues have carried translations of The Origins of the Movement for Workers' Councils in Germany and of material issued by Point Blank as well as discussion articles on the now defunct Situationist International and on Council Communism (translated, in fact, as "Council Socialism"). All in all this is an encouraging trend perhaps, but at the same time one needs to keep in mind the obstacles to a correct grasp of socialist theory which remain. Just because it is accepted without question that 'marxism' and 'anarchism' have to be opposed ('marxism' meaning for those associated with Anarchism, of course, the doctrine of vanguard parties, visionary leadership and ruthless dictatorship elaborated by Lenin), groups like the situationists are imagined to be 'anarchists'. In other words, however genuine the efforts which are made to understand the theories of the Councilists (say) or the Situationists, this is done by attempting to fit them into the conceptual framework of a preconceived anarchism. As an example of this we can mention that presentation of the Situationists' ideas in the magazine Anarchism has been in a column with the general heading of 'Foreign Anarchist Groups' (and this despite the fact that Point Blank took pains to emphasise in a communication to Anarchism that "We are not anarchists") Nor is Anarchism an isolated case in this respect. Another example is the book The Extreme Left and Extreme Right in France by Irie Ken (Furansu no Kyokusha to Kyokun, San Ichi Shobo, Tokyo, 1975) which has just been published here. The 'extreme left' which Irie talks about is classified by him into three sections - 'trotskyists', 'maoists' and 'anarchists' - plus some dissenting satellites of the CP (which include the Bordigist group Programme Communiste which, apparently unbeknown to Irie, has been independent of the CPs since the late 1920s!). It is hardly surprising that, given this basic classification, groups such as Revolution Internationale find themselves coming under an 'anarchist' heading. Nor is there any conscious misrepresentation by Irie here. It is just that the Japanese (to use his terminology) 'extreme left' really does conform to this trotskyist-maoist-anarchist line up, and for Irie at any rate, it is natural to try to categorise the French 'left' in the same way. Even if the misrepresentation is

unconscious, however, it ought to be obvious that the theory of a group like Revolution Internationale is bound to be misunderstood when the only way Irie and those like him know of examining it is through a pair of 'anarchist' spectacles.

As I wrote earlier, I think it is important that we revolutionaries in the west clearly recognise this situation as it exists in Japan (and even more so elsewhere outside of the advanced, industrialised countries) and draw the necessary conclusions from it. There are various aspects of the way in which capitalism grew up in Japan and the way in which the working class developed which can help to account for this state of affairs but what in my opinion makes it most important for us to recognise this situation is that, capitalism being a world system with the working class spread out across the globe and still sandwiched between layers of the peasantry and other social classes, the Japanese section of the working class is a far more authentic representative of the class on a world scale than are those sections to be found in the countries of Western Europe and North America. Certainly the effect on me, as one individual revolutionary socialist who happens to come from Europe, of living in a country such as Japan for a period has been to make me more convinced than ever of the years of long, hard struggle we have ahead of us before a communist society can be realised.

Important though these general questions are, however, there are only a limited number of points that one can take up in a single article and rather than deal further with them here I would prefer to concentrate on attempting to build up a picture of just how far the theory of communism has progressed in Japan. To do this I want to briefly outline the ideas of a more or less isolated thinker called Haniya Yutaka. Haniya is easily the most impressive person I have come across during eighteen months of searching for the communist idea in Japan but what one has to hasten to add to this is that he is impressive only by Japanese standards. The reason for all the background information presented up till now is that without it Haniya is likely to appear as no more than a nonentity to those familiar with the far more sophisticated levels of theory which exist elsewhere. Surely the point to bear in mind though, is that all of us have to be seen against the background of the environment in which we live and are active. Since the idea of communism is not something which descends ready-made from out the skies, we shall have to face up to the fact that for better or worse Haniya's ideas are apparently the most advanced that the Japanese working class movement has to offer and that the struggle to build a correct theory will necessarily have to start here from the sort of level which he represents.

I first became aware of Haniya Yutaka when I was reading one of the Tokyo evening newspapers one day and my eye happened to fall on a short article with the title: Abolition of Wage Labour and Commodity Production. If it were not for the copyright laws, it would be worth giving a translation of this article here since it contains in a nutshell all the strengths and weaknesses of Haniya's position. What I will do instead is paraphrase his arguments. The abolition of wage labour and of commodity production remains an empty dream, wrote Haniya, and this is true not merely in the capitalist countries but in the socialist (!) countries too. According to Haniya, in these 'socialist' countries the means of production have been socialised and medical care and education made free. In doing this the first steps have been taken towards abolishing wage labour and commodity production (!) The succeeding steps which ought to have followed

this are supposed to be the introduction of firstly free housing, then free transport and finally free food and clothing. Haniya's explanation of why this has not been done seems to be a bureaucratic one. In his allegedly 'socialist' countries the working people are supervised by a bureaucracy which concerns itself only with its controlling functions. This bureaucracy gives no thought at all to the fact that "if transport, bread and clothing were rapidly made free, then equality, liberty and fraternity (which are the aims of the revolution) would be realised".

As can be seen, it is a strangely naive line of thinking. Haniya has a clear understanding of the basic communist idea - the need for a society without wage labour or commodity production - but his way of understanding this is reminiscent of the bureaucratic analysis of Russian society which orthodox trotskyists adhere to and, even more so (particularly with regards to the phased introduction of free consumption) of the well-meant but rather cranky ideas of Kropotkin's The conquest of bread. It is true that when I subsequently met and talked with Haniya he was prepared to agree that Russia and his other 'socialist' countries were really state capitalist, but the very ease with which he conceded this point indicated the lack of importance which he attached to it. Haniya is a prolific writer (of novels and literary criticism as well as political articles) and has frequently restated and enlarged on the themes of the article which I have summarised above. He is also a writer who is popular among the left-wing university students' circles here. Whatever the reasons for the popularity he enjoys, however, it unfortunately does not derive from his presentation of the communist idea. Few if any of those who read his works have grasped the significance of this area of his ideas - not surprisingly, we might be tempted to say, considering the way in which he presents them! Describing his own political position, Haniya calls himself an "anarcho-marxist" but, although it is true that his objections to commodity production specifically derive from Marx, the 'marxist' component of his thought is in general leninism. He was a member of the underground JCP in the years before the war and the scars of this experience still remain, particularly in his reluctance to recognise the bourgeois revolutionary role which Lenin fulfilled in Russia in 1917. Since the war he has been on the wings of the anarchist movement and has inherited from traditional anarchism some of its better features - objection to vanguard parties and so on. But it is not only the better elements which he can be said to have inherited from anarchism. Pervading all his writings there is a lack of class analysis, so that for Haniya the emancipation of the people has to be the act of the people itself. I say "on the wings of the anarchist movement" because, despite the fact that quite recently his ideas were presented at some length in one of the anarchist journals here (Museifushuot Kenkyu, NO. 2, 1974), as Haniya pointed out to me himself this should not be taken as an indication that - as yet, at any rate - many anarchists here share his commitment to communism.

I am afraid that I cannot append any comfortingly optimistic conclusion to this article. Considering the advanced stage of development reached by Japanese capitalism and the immense numerical size of the Japanese working class, the utter weakness of communist ideas here should be a sobering indication to all communists of the immaturity of our class. Japanese capital today is a giant by any terms but the working class stands before it like a defenceless babe. Even in the other advanced, industrialised countries where the communist idea is slightly more widespread and rather more coherently developed, who can pretend that the situation is that much different? The best that I can say is that we communists are engaged in the hardest struggle of all, the struggle

to change the world. Hard though it is, it remains the only worthwhile struggle. If we are going to change the world, though, surely our first task has to be to accurately recognise the world as it is.

John Crump. Tokyo. March, 1975.

EEC - DISCUSSION

NOTE: The following two articles generally sum up the views expressed during a discussion on the "Common Market" at our Easter conference.

NO TO NATIONALISM

The Common Market issue is coming to a head with the referendum. The problems it poses for socialists have not generally been seriously discussed. The bulk of the left has taken a position in favour of withdrawal. This has grave dangers for the working class. There can be no doubt that chauvinism is one of capitalism's most powerful weapons for dividing the workers, yet here we find all sorts of 'socialists' joining in a chauvinist campaign, to the extent that several union leaders have appeared alongside Powell and other Fascists. It is therefore necessary to examine the issue carefully.

What is the reason for the E.E.C.? Basically it is an attempt to develop a European capital independent of U.S. and Russian imperialism. The 1960's saw growing concern about U.S. hegemony, culminating in Servan-Schreiber's 'Le Defi Americain'. In order to counter this threat, increasing efforts were made to unify European capital. Also there was earlier a political motivation, an attempt to overcome the divisions which led to 2 World Wars. Many people were led to regard the E.E.C. as an attempt to go beyond the nation-state; instead it is an attempt to create a bigger one.

British capitalism was divided on the issue; some sectors, particularly industrial ones, wanted to enter; others were not so sure. The city operates on a global basis anyway, and was not greatly worried. Some were attached to the U.S.A., still others (probably correctly) were scared of the competition they might face. Finally the general consensus decided in favour of entry; however, large sectors remained opposed. If the ruling class had been unanimous, the matter would have been settled long ago - there is no plan for a referendum on N.A.T.O. !

The Labour Party opposed the E.E.C. in 1962, with an emotional speech by Gaitskell about '1000 years of history'. This managed to unite the party, then deeply divided, by appealing to its chauvinist basis. Later a Labour government tried to take Britain in, but failed. After the election of Heath, Wilson was faced by a problem similar to Gaitskell's. Six years of power had exposed the viciously reactionary nature of Labourism. The working class were rejecting it and, even worse in the eyes of Wilson and Co. were beginning to reject the whole Parliamentary rag-bag. So Wilson (initially), Benn and Co. again adopted the anti-EEC position and, hey presto, party and unions were again united. The left turned eagerly to this diversion. Michael Foot

babbles on about 'national sovereignty', 'threat to Parliament' and other matters of profound socialist analysis. John Gollan joined in saying that the (Feb'74) election was not being fought on the basis of internationalism! The various vanguards followed, after some quibbling. 'Socialist Worker' now tells us that 'all socialists must vote no' but of course only in an internationalist manner.

What arguments are produced for this line? Firstly, it is suggested that the E.E.C. is a capitalist institution. It can hardly have escaped even Foot's notice that independent Britain is not the promised land. Nor is it likely that the referendum will include provision for I.S. to vote 'for a Socialist Europe'. The simple fact is that we are to be faced with a choice between 2 modes of capitalist organisation. Another reason is that we would lose the right to 'an independent foreign policy' i.e. to kow-tow to U.S. imperialism of our own free will. Socialism cannot be built in Britain alone. Nowhere has any real evidence been produced to show that the workers will be better off as a result of withdrawal, either immediately or in the long-term. The most popular argument for withdrawal is that entry raised prices. Prices rise all over the world, because of the growing crises of capitalism, which uses inflation as a real wage-cut.

Why has the Left taken this position? Basically because, however 'Marxist', however 'revolutionary', it remains fundamentally national. All its policies are directed towards the Labour Party. The slogan of the entire Left is 'nationalise' - no one notices that this means 'make national'. Several groups have recently produced pamphlets on the motor industry which hardly mention the situation elsewhere, and none advocate uniting with workers in other countries. Politics has become completely dominated by the bourgeois nation-state (for a good analysis of this situation, see Nairn's 'The Left Against Europe' New Left Review 75).

The lack of serious theoretical justification for the anti-EEC position does not avoid its practical consequences. Apart from the alliance with Facism mentioned above, unions are actually cutting what few links they have with Europeans unions, at a time when wider unity is more necessary than ever.

Should we support entry, as Nairn suggests? If we were obliged to take a position on one side or the other, the answer might be yes, just as Marx for instance supported free trade. However, it is not the task of revolutionaries to take a position on every issue of capitalist politics, but to show the way to transcend that politics. For over a century, workers have been divided and bamboozled by chauvinism, especially in Britain. Now the bourgeoisie is compelled to question it itself. Then let us use the opportunity to attack it altogether, not in the name of a larger nation, but of a united world working class. Let us say to workers 'the ruling class is already united, unite to oppose them'. The referendum is irrelevant - whether the answer is yes or no, we should call for workers unity. As a first step it is necessary to put forward the proposal for world solidarity in the car industry, so far the worst victim of the crisis.

NEITHER WASHINGTON OR BRUSSELS BUT WORLD CLASS STRUGGLE.

Phil McShane.

WHY SOCIALISTS SHOULD SAY "NO"

As the campaign for the EEC referendum gets under way and the opposing capitalist camps pour out a flood of pro and contra propaganda, the question arises of what attitude socialists should take both towards the EEC and the campaign. Although no one in our grouping takes a pro-EEC position (however there exists not only Social-Democratic pro-entry groups but also an outfit called Communists for Europe whose reasons for staying in will have to be answered) there is a majority which says that the question is one of a contradiction between rival capitalist interests, that it doesn't really matter to workers whether Britain is in or out, because although the language of the exploiters may change the fact of exploitation will not, and therefore advocates abstention in the referendum. The minority, basing itself not on the social-chauvinist outlook of the Stalinists and Tribuneites but on the internationalist outlook of World Socialism says that socialists should campaign for a massive no vote from the working class. It is the purpose of this article to explain the views of the minority.

Right away there arises the problem of how Socialists carry on their work amongst the working class. Do we from the olympian heights of our ideology (based of course on the infalible texts of the masters) present our ideas in an abstract manner hoping that someone someplace will listen, on the odd occasion condescending to stroll down when the activities of the workers happen to coincide with what we're advocating, or do we as an integral part of the class participate in the day to day struggle seeking to transform basic class consciousness into revolutionary consciousness, modifying our theory in the light of our praxis? If the answer to the latter is affirmative then not to participate in the EEC referendum because we're internationalists is like not participating in wages struggles because we want the abolition of the wages system or not fighting prices rises because we're for the abolition of commodity production. It was because such attitudes were taken by the "Marxists" of the Socialist League and the SDP at the end of the 19th. Century that the workers brought into struggle by the new unionism turned towards the reformism of firstly the ILP and then the Labour Party.

Having said all this, how then and why do socialists take part in the struggle against the EEC? The EEC is the economic arm of Western monopoly capitalism just as NATO is its military arm. The continuation of British membership of the EEC can only strengthen the capitalist system viz-a-viz the European working class, (already we have seen the mobilisation of NATO troops to crush the general strike in France in 1968 and heard of NATO's counter insurgency plans from that would be Bonaparte General Walker). British withdrawal would weaken the capitalist alliance without isolating in any way British workers from their European fellows. Likewise, British entry has been bought at the price of dearer food something which of course suits the profit hungry monopolies. Workers, who are not the simpletons some people think they are, know this and it is the inability of workers to pay rising prices as much as the "wogs begin at Calais" outlook, the legacy of a now defunct Empire, which determines their opposition to the EEC.

It is, therefore, the task of socialists while working for a massive no vote to explain that there is an alternative to the EEC other

than the "little englandism" currently being peddled from the ultra-right to the 'Communist' Party. This alternative is a Socialist Europe taking in not only the EEC countries but also those outside including those now under Great Russian domination. (As internationalists we realise that Socialism can only finally triumph on a world scale; it is, however, unrealistic to imagine social revolution will break out everywhere simultaneously. Europe, as recent events in France, Italy, Greece and Portugal has shown, is the weakest link in the world capitalist chain.)

We must not pose the question of a Socialist Europe as a kind of abstract afterthought as the trotskyists do, but begin to build for it now by waging an all out struggle against chauvinism, for working class internationalism and by making contacts with workers on the continent as the first step towards a European Congress of Workers Councils. If we fail to do this we will abandon whole sections of workers to the radical right whose anti-capitalist rhetoric is now beginning to sound more convincing than that of the Labour left. To abstain means to abandon the historical role we as socialists have chosen. It is as simple as that.

Terry Liddle.

EDITORIAL COMMENT

We are in general agreement with the majority view in our group as outlined in Phil's article.

Also we disagree with the implication in Terrys article that our role as socialists stands or falls on the EEC issue. There really is NO comparison between participation on one side or the other in the EEC referendum campaign and our involvement in the direct action of our class in strikes, occupations and boycotts to defend or improve our quality of life.

***** WORTH READING*****

BENEATH THE CITY STREETS - Peter Laurie - about the alternative system of Government in Britain prepared for use in nuclear war or civil unrest.
 PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES - (Hansard), House of Lords for Wednesday 26th February 1975 (Vol. 357, No. 53.) Debate on motion proposed by Lord Chalfont, calling attention to subversive and extremist elements in society. HMSO 22p.
 DOWN AMONG THE WOMEN - well written feminist fictional story. By Fay Weldon.
 CEYLON: The JVP Uprising of April 1971. Solidarity pamphlet 25p.
 VIETNAM: Whose Victory? By Bob Potter. " " " "
 TEACHERS ACTION - periodical of Teachers Action Collective. 10p per copy. 3 issues so far.

Most publications mentioned in this issue can be obtained, post extra, from "Rising Free" 197 Kings Cross Road, London, W.C.1.

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LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM is a discussion journal through which views on all aspects of capitalist society and the struggle for socialism can be exchanged and discussed, with the aim of making clearer the most productive ways in which we can work to create a free socialist society.

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* * * * *

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*** For addresses of all Social Revolution groups and contacts see page 14.

Note : We apologise for the poor quality of some of the duplicated sheets. At £2 for 500 sheets re-doing all the bad ones would have bankrupted us!

DRAFT MANIFESTO

2

Following is the SOCIAL REVOLUTION GROUP's Draft Manifesto, as agreed upon at our last two conferences. This sets out the basic attitudes and principles of SOCIAL REVOLUTION, and at present the basis of SRG membership is general agreement with the Draft Manifesto. At our next conference, to be held in London (probably in February) we will be considering two further sections of the Manifesto, "State Capitalism and Nationalisation" and "Parliament". Apart from these likely additions, we intend to let the Manifesto stand as it is till the following conference which will probably be held in May. In the meantime we invite everyone, within and without the group, to put forward their views, suggestions, and criticisms of the Manifesto — write to the Aberdeen Group. At our May conference we will be considering proposed changes and additions to the Manifesto. Shortly afterwards we will, publish it as amended in pamphlet form.

CAPITALISM:

Never has the bankruptcy of our social system been more widely realised. Even in the "affluent 60's" the need for change was clear. Workers rebelled against boring, pointless work. Students attacked an educational system training them for such work. The problems of cities multiplied regardless of a superficial affluence. Meanwhile the majority of the world's population went without the basic needs of life.

The basic similarity of the supposed alternatives became obvious. The USSR, long the hope of opponents of western capitalism, was shown to be a rather more brutal variation on the same theme. Its replacement as supposed Utopia, Red China, showed for example by its policy in support for the reactionary government in Pakistan, that it played the same game by the same rules.

Today even the limited gains of this period are fast disappearing. Unemployment and inflation attack peoples' living standards, and produce anxiety even amongst those not directly affected. Civil rights are under attack in many countries. The ruling class turns away from its old Liberal Democratic traditions towards either the left or right proponents of totalitarianism. Aspects of this in terms of ideology and organisation are militarism, chauvinism and racism.

It is not enough to bemoan this situation; we must try to analyse its causes. These lie, not in the faults of leaders or the formal relations of property, for these things may be varied without making any difference. Rather, the cause is the nature of capitalism, a system based on the appropriation by a minority (the capitalist class) of the wealth created by the work of the majority of the people in society. Out of this economic relationship arises the alienation of people from themselves, each other and their world. Since its inception, capitalism has relied on competition, not only the economic competition between companies, nation-states and blocs, e.g. Ford against Leyland, Britain against Germany, NATO against Warsaw Pact, Russia against China; but also competition at all levels, e.g. man against woman, black against white, protestant against catholic. Look at the way workers are told that they must work harder, not because we need more cars, etc., but in order to compete with other countries. In the past, economic competition has, in human terms, been progressive in that it laid the material foundations for the transition to Socialism, but now it leads only to waste, war and slump.

The struggle takes place for control of wealth, material resources, land, population and markets. Those who do not compete simply go under: therefore capitalism imposes its rule upon the whole world and it cannot be transcended except on this basis. It is this competition — cold, impersonal and ruthless — which is the real master, and keeps us all in slavery, both economic and social. However, in all parts of the world capitalist system, there are those who are in a position of power and privilege — whether businessmen, generals or bureaucrats, together with those who own capital but perform no social function at all, are the ruling class who have a vested interest in maintaining the system.

WAR:

The capitalist system is divided into nation-states, blocs and alliances. These, generally speaking, exist to support and defend their own local sectors of capitalism against the interests of rival capitalisms. As markets become saturated, or raw materials scarce, so the rival sectors of capitalism must seek new outlets for the commodities they produce, new sources of raw materials and inevitably new trade routes to utilise them. They increasingly find that their rivals have the same objective or that the local ruling class does not wish to be dominated. From this situation the outbreak of a trade war is likely as nation-states, blocs or alliances step in to assist their interests. Trade wars have a tendency to hot up into real shooting wars as the problems facing the capitalists become too severe to be overcome by negotiation.

Thus, wars are fought over capitalist interests — capturing new markets, sources of raw materials, or defending or capturing new trade routes. Inevitably, it is not the bosses who get themselves killed

In these disputes, but the workers who have been duped by talk of "national interest", patriotism, defence of the fatherland", etc. But the workers' real class interests lie not in supporting the efforts of one ruling class to wipe out their competitors, but in the success of the social revolution to destroy social classes which are the cause of war.

Revolutionary socialists, therefore, do not support the wars of capitalism, but urge class unity between workers of all lands against their common enemy — the world's ruling class. Instead of inter-imperialist war we urge class war and social revolution, solidarity of the world's workers and the subversion of the armed forces. Therefore we urge rank and file soldiers to see their identity of interest with the working class against the top-ranking officers who form part of the ruling class and to eventually form soldiers' councils which will act together with the workers' councils. To this end we work with soldiers for full trade union and political rights.

NATIONAL LIBERATION AND IMPERIALISM:

Around the turn of the century, capitalism became the dominant social system in the world. This necessitated a change in the outlook of revolutionary socialists to the question of national liberation struggles. Prior to 1900, capitalism had been a new social system; moreover, was fighting to secure its dominance over other, reactionary systems such as feudal and despotic societies. Capitalism then had a useful role to play in as much as it was developing the productive potential of abundance necessary for the establishment of socialism and brought into being the class whose interests lay in the overthrow of capitalism — the workers.

At this time, socialists could still postulate the theory that workers could support local capitalist revolutions and still maintain autonomy as a class. The theory was probably correct, though it never seems to have been applied in practice. Nonetheless, at this time the capitalist system could still expand outwards, and as a result the workers could make real, permanent gains from the system, which allowed them to develop their autonomy. Indeed, support by the workers for the system was at times necessary for their own survival, for conquest by one of the reactionary social systems would have brought their class destruction.

But around the turn of the century all this changed. Either by means of local capitalist revolutions or by the importing of capitalism through foreign investment (imperialism), most of the world had come under the control of the capitalist mode of production. Even the peasants of the most backward countries were being drawn into the sphere of the market. Capitalism was successfully established, with no other social system as competitor. The world became divided into rival blocs of national capitalisms; today these are represented by NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the Chinese bloc. The local units of capitalism are still expansive, but in the process they came into conflict with the other blocs — this is the reason behind the two world wars of this century; they were essentially inter-imperialist wars. Moreover, with its dominance of the world, capitalism had established the conditions necessary for the successful establishment of a socialist society, whilst at the same time becoming a system based on the positive DESTRUCTION of social wealth through its internecine rivalries and conflicts, as well as the "normal" workings of the system in boom, with the destruction of food; waste production; armaments expenditure; etc. No longer can local proto-ruling classes set themselves up outside the influence of one or other of the imperialist blocs. For the working class there is one alternative only — socialism. We no longer have any interest in supporting one or other ruling clique.

However, in some "third world" countries there exist movements claiming to be struggling for "national liberation". They seek to make their state independent but in practice they are forced from the sphere of influence of one imperialist bloc to that of another. These "liberation" forces derive their support either from the military might of some other power, or by channelling the grievances of the local peasants and workers in their own direction. Experience has taught us that whenever these workers and peasants attempt to assert their own class interests, then the forces of "national liberation" reveal their true class interests by brutally suppressing them.

Many leftists argue that the workers should support such struggles for "national liberation"; this in practice means that they want the workers to support one side or another in an inter-imperialist war. In doing so, they reveal themselves as the left agents of Soviet or Chinese capitalism, and therefore as the enemies of the world's working class and peasantry. The workers and peasants of the "third world" countries will play their part in the world revolution by forming their own revolutionary socialist organisations. In the meantime, we will aid the struggle of workers and peasants in "third world" countries by struggling to overthrow capitalism in our own situation, and we will attempt to provide whatever practical solidarity is possible — for example by blacking armaments intended for Chile.

RACISM: The ruling-class has always tried to divide the workers, in order to maintain its control over us. This is demonstrated in the strategy of 'divide and control' so often used in colonial conquest, but it applies equally at home. In a workplace, for instance, management often tries to play off skilled workers against 'unskilled' in order to defeat the struggles of both. Racism and other attitudes alledging the superiority of one group of workers over another are particularly vicious weapons used by the bosses all over the world to set us fighting amongst ourselves.

From its earliest days, capitalism has relied upon the exploitation of people all over the world. The slave, colonialism, the appalling conditions of British workers during the industrial revolution, all helped to build up the modern industrial economies. In order to maintain this system of exploitation, the ruling classes have tried to persuade each group of workers that they threatened by the others. When Jewish workers began to come to Britain from East Europe at the end of the last century to escape oppression there was a massive anti-immigration campaign, resulting in the Aliens Act.

Today there is massive immigration into all industrial nations in Europe. In all of them there have been strong movements against it, which have served to divide workers in many industries.

In periods of expansion highly industrialised nation-states reach a point where there exists a "labour shortage" either in the economy as a whole or in sectors of the economy (eg. amongst unskilled workers).

To overcome this "shortage" the countries attempt to encourage unskilled foreign immigrants to enter their country to fill the shortage (eg. London Transport's recruitment campaign of the 'fifties in Jamaica). In times of crisis there appears again a "labour reserve army". Then the presence of ethnic minorities can be used by sections of the ruling class as scapegoats for the workers' problems. Racism is used to head off class struggle.

In modern society most immigrants are worst off in every respect--housing, education, unemployment etc. At the same time, they are let down by the official working class organisations even more than are white workers. Consequently they are forced to organise themselves. In the attempt ideas of inverted racism naturally occur, such as those of Malcolm X.

Being proud of being black and re-asserting black culture is a definite step forward but blacks cannot go it alone. Black racism is no answer. However it cannot be overcome by pious lectures from white "revolutionaries", it can only be overcome in the development of the class struggle.

SEX ROLES: How often have you heard things like this? WOMEN are 'natural' mothers, home-makers, domestic, passive, helpless, subjective, emotional, soft, romantic, responsive, dependant, clothes-conscious, empty-headed, etc. MEN are 'natural' businessmen, decisive, independent, active, strong, hard, brave, adventurous, objective, dependable etc. None but the most blatant male chauvinist would maintain that adjectives applied to women suggest her inferiority to men. Yet many people believe that these adjectives correctly describe the characteristic differences between the sexes and that these differences are both natural and desirable. However although people naturally must sleep, eat, reproduce, etc., how we carry out these functions and how we live generally is not inevitably and naturally determined.

We start to learn our role in society from the moment we're born, our sex and our class determine what our role shall be. A few will move from one class to another and some women will 'conquer' male preserves and be looked on as unnatural. The socialisation process starts first with our parents in the home, then the school, the church and finally the workplace then back to the home with our own children and so on. This process of socialisation or of learning behaviour acceptable to societies' dominant class, has been laid down year after year, century after century, so that indeed certain behaviour patterns do appear 'normal' even 'natural' and such beliefs are encouraged by the dominant (economic) class. However the dominant class moulds society in its own interest. As neither the dominant class or its interests remain static, so neither does the socialisation process; though the subjective response to change tends to lag behind it.

Capitalism's necessity for economic growth required the absorption of an ever increasing workforce utilising female labour along with the rest, and in so doing undermining the previously accepted concept of a woman's place being in the home. But just as easily in times of economic crisis for the dominant class, women can be the first out. Besides women have another role which can be emphasised or ignored depending on economic boom or slump, that of reproducing and servicing the labourforce. This is women's most important role to capitalism, though it is not afforded such economic recognition. It is at the point of child-rearing, where the socialisation of women into the role of mother; childminder, teacher, domestic, and economic dependant; pays off for capitalism. Mother does her duty without question, without financial incentives. From birth girls are trained for this role, work is only incidental. It doesn't matter if she gets a good education or a good job, her role is to reproduce and serve the male worker, while

his role is to make her role possible by working. Also capitalism has another role for him apart from work: Boys especially are taught to repress their fears and emotions and adapt an aggressive attitude. This serves its purpose in both work and war time. Working class men are expected to do their duty, in the role of soldier and are thus encouraged from childhood to play wargames. The division of workers into sex roles causes them to think mainly of their own sex and makes women and men undermine each others struggle. Today some people are questioning these roles. Homosexuals have never fitted into sex roles. Even those into role-playing demonstrate how flexible and therefore how pointless these roles are. Because of this homosexuals are oppressed. Though most of the laws and violence are directed against gay men, it's perhaps lesbians who most undermine sexism, many lesbians are activists in the Womens Lib. Movmt. Though the Gay Liberation movement has lost impetus, and never included more than a small of gays, its existence has gradually affected the rest of the community. Gay men are often still male chauvinist but the militancy of lesbians has forced them to challenge this to an extent heterosexual men do not usually have to. It is now far more than just the GLF who see gay oppression as part of the wider oppression of women. Action has been organised against specific cases of discrimination and the Gay Trades Union groups are directly affecting people who the movement has not previously included in the whole century of its existence. *****

Capitalism is capable of accomodating many of womens' desires for equality with men, without harming the interest of the dominant class. It would not be difficult for a state-capitalist //allow mothers economic independence from men by paying them a //state wage, as indeed some womens liberationists are demanding, fathers could equally apply for the job without in any way undermining the economic organisation of society. Attitudes that have taken centuries to build take time to breakdown, meanwhile capitalism is quite capable of co-opting attempts to breakdown repressive sexist relationships. Socialists must encourage those who are questioning their role to link up their struggle with the struggles of other workers, to see the oppression of workers by capitalism as a whole and to seek to counter: that oppression by revolution. However we can't show workers how they're oppressed or how they oppress others unless we consciously fight sexism in ourselves and the group. Socialism is only possible when most workers become conscious of the oppressive nature of capitalism, not just how we're oppressed but also how we oppress others. Sexism cannot be explained comprehensively in purely economic terms, economic independence from men alone will not liberate women, only the complete overthrow of capitalism through social revolution will free us all from the repressive roles we are socialised into. Then we can make our own decisions to live as we desire. By producing what we need we can take what we want. Women won't need to be dependent on men, restrictive sex-role training will lose its function and be made redundant.

*****INSERT: The Womens' Liberation Movement has grown firstly amongst women who have been through Higher Education and who are bored by their role of mother and miss the 'freedom' that economic independence allowed to them prior to marriage. Secondly by poorer-educated women both encouraged by and resentful of their better-off sisters. It is important that we should strive to achieve as great a measure of sexual equality within capitalism as possible. Demands for equal wages, equal job opportunities, free contraception and abortion facilities, free creches in every locality, and so on, should be pushed as much as we can. But if we stop at achieving these demands we will only have substituted the oppression of women in the nuclear family by the more direct oppression by the state and commodity society in general. Authoritarian sexual relationships in the family which reflect and reinforce authoritarianism in other aspects of life, can and must be broken down, but capitalism will only co-operate in allowing this to the extent that it can substitute other means of authoritarian conditioning, through its control of the state and the media in particular.

EDUCATION

The 'education' system we see today is really a process of social engineering or training people to fit into society as it already exists without criticism or wanting to change that system. We would be more accurate to refer to this system therefore as a training or schooling system because education should be a process whereby people become critically aware of reality, which can lead to effective action upon it. Obviously this does not happen in our schooling system, which merely ties us to present society and encourages its prolongation.

Our present schooling system is based on compulsion, not free choice - by law we are forced to attend. The school system holds a monopoly on knowledge and the student has little choice in what is learned. Youth is crammed with what it does not want at a time when it cannot appreciate it. Enquiring minds are often dulled by this process (very necessary, of course, if we never want effective changes in society). Young children learn many things without formal teaching because they have enquiring minds.

This so-called 'education' system is of course completely institutionalised (education is seen as taking place within four walls at set times for set ages). The system is also identified with hierarchy and privilege and exclusion as in wider society. Educational institutions become dominating institutions rather than opportunity networks. Here the young are concentrated on (less critical clientele) with parents pushing for the prizes they have been socialised to want for their children.

This institutionalised system then helps to perpetuate and foster the type of society we have at present. This involves fitting individuals into certain roles and putting over only socially-approved values, those of conformity, hierarchy, leadership, and authority being prime examples. (this is not done in a conspiratorial way but nevertheless the result ensues). If education did help people to be critical about society and through this make improvements, we would not be educated to maintain the status quo by the indoctrination of socially-approved values of an unjust society. If education is to be a major institution in developing a 'just' world then a basic objective should be an understanding of the world in which we live and the one we hope for. Why does the schooling system avoid linking together crucial present-day problems e.g. starvation while food is destroyed, pollution amidst advanced technology.

Of course we only have to look briefly at the history of education to see the links it has with industry. Mass education developed along with the production line and the mechanical age. As industry became more developed so more schooling was needed. At first only basics were necessary; as industry advanced so did schooling e.g. typewriting was introduced into curriculum when needed by industry.

Specialisation and standardisation in industry seem to be mirrored in the educational institution at all levels. Of course the competition in industry is also prevalent in education, whether it's competition in exams or sports or collecting for charities.

There is a marked similarity between a forced 9am to 4pm school day and a forced workday in an office or boring job. We cannot help but see schooling as a "good" training for later work.

Of course in mirroring society the education system helps perpetuate sex roles. There are still boys' and girls' subjects and jobs in schools. How can the young develop as they wish if they have roles forced on them at an early age?

For the sake of morals everyone is made to think there is equal opportunity in the school system. It is not hard to see however that social class is maintained even through the system - and this is no accident. Finances, parental pressure, aspirations, different values and expectations all contribute to this.

Education should be a life-long experience of critical development. It can be gained from many sources; maybe one of these could be a teacher/student relationship with students having choice in what they want to learn. The world itself has much to offer, and education through experience is surely vital to all and not to be dismissed as it tends to be today. The education system we have needs radically altering, but the structures of wider society try to prevent this. Both need changing as both bolster each other up.

Today we see the beginnings of a desire for change. Not everyone involved in education accepts it in its present form. Students for instance in the classroom often rebel against authority and the work they are forced to do, or they miss lessons, lectures, etc.. A school students' union exists to try to fight for better conditions and more rights for young students, as unions exist for older students. Teachers too, but individually in their places of work and collectively in teachers' action groups, through magazines, etc. try to initiate changes to the system both on the academic and the personal side of the system. Some disillusioned teachers have set up free schools to experiment with alternative educational systems.

We believe that both fighting within the state educational system and trying out alternatives outside it are valuable as starting points for the creation of a socialist form of education. We consider this struggle to transform education to be part of the wider class struggle to change relationships throughout society.

If people are trained to obey, to distrust their own decisions, and robbed of their initiative, confidence and ability to criticise and put out alternatives by the schooling process, then it will be all the more difficult for them to take part in the transformation to a socialist society.

We encourage these trends in education because they contain elements of what we think education in a socialist society will be trying to do; but also, we welcome them because they bring a socialist society closer.

TRADE UNIONS: With the growth of industrial capitalism and the transformation of the majority into wage labourers, there arose, in the first instance mainly amongst skilled workers, Trade Unions whose aim was to defend the economic interests in this or that trade against the interests of the employers. Later, trade unionism grew among unskilled workers. In Britain, this began in the 1800's, in some cases with the help of socialists such as Eleanor Marx.

Given today, at the workplace, trade union activity still forms the workers' front line of self-defence against capitalism. This struggle, however, the vague commitments to a new society. The constitutions of some TUs notwithstanding, is not for socialising but for more within capitalism. However, because they have to mediate between workers and capitalism, Trade Unions contain within themselves contradictions. Whilst they

can represent the interests of workers against capital, often they work the other way round and become tools for the control of the workers. We see this occurring in many disputes where the unions sell-out and sabotage the actions of the workers in dispute. We see it also in the way that unions divide the working class, cultivating sectional interests and craft-consciousness. For example, there exist separate unions for manual and white-collar workers in local government. We see it in the collaboration of unions with management in running industry, and therefore exploiting workers, by agreeing to lay-offs, productivity deals, etc., and in co-operation with governments (particularly Labour governments) in wage control policies; rationalisation programmes and import controls which only hinder the development of world working class unity. In many countries the trade unions are completely integrated into the state machine (as in the state capitalist regimes of Russia and Eastern Europe) or act quite openly as policemen in the workplace (as in the USA). These factors result in workers having to fight the union bosses as well as the employers and the state. Indeed, often the union bureaucracies only intervene to give "support" in order to defuse the situation, and channel protest along easily-controlled "respectable paths" - thus attempting to keep the struggle within the bounds of the system. To counter this, workers have developed new organisations such as shop stewards committees. In recent years, many strikes have been organised on this level against unions and bosses together, but even the shop stewards' organisations are now being co-opted in many cases.

The class struggle occurs not only through TUs but within them.

This is a result of their social role, rather than faulty leadership. Thus the manipulative use (as by Leninist groups) of rank and file groups to try to capture the union apparatus or change the leadership is futile from a Socialist point of view, as are attempts at setting up alternative unions (e.g. *Glass & General Workers' Union* after the Pilkington strike). The extent to which individual unions are co-opted differs, but the trend is the same.

As libertarian communists, we participate in all the struggles of our class, and so in the Trades Unions. To do so, not with any illusions, but solely in order to assist the class struggle. Revolutionaries should not, in our opinion, become full-time, paid union officials or take up any trade union post which carries any substantial privileges. We do not seek to become leaders and manipulate the workers; instead we support the fights of workers against both bosses and trade union leaders. We also seek to develop an awareness of how each individual dispute is part of an overall class struggle, and how this struggle can only be resolved by the creation of socialist society. We attack the undemocratic manipulations of both right and left and do not pretend that revolutionary slogans passed by tiny meetings are the real voice of our class. Campaigns, strikes and occupations should, where possible, be run by general assemblies of the workers involved, and by directly elected and immediately revocable rank and file action, strike, and occupation committees, which are the forerunners of genuine workers' councils in industry.

To recognise Trade Unions of their nature cannot be used to destroy capitalism. This is the task of the workers' councils.

WORKERS' COUNCILS

The revolutionary transformation of society from capitalism to socialism is not simply a change of political power, or even economic organisation, but involves a conscious effort to revolutionise all the relationships of everyday life - to humanise the way we relate sexually; the way we educate ourselves; the way we work and live together and simultaneously to alter the physical layout of society.

Such a task is incapable of achievement through any of the existing governmental forms or permanent working class organisations within capitalism. It is no parliamentary party, trade union affair, but requires forms of organisation which allow maximum involvement of the entire working class, unleash the huge reservoir of creative activity that is bound within each of us.

There is no detailed blueprint that can be drawn up to suit the varied historical, technological and technological conditions that exist throughout the world but there are numerous examples that can be drawn from the experience of working class struggle at its height, which can be used as a guide to the immediate future. In Russia 1905 and 1917; Hungary 1919 and 1956; Germany 1918-1919; Italy 1920; Spain 1936; France 1936; Chile 1971-1973; Portugal today; and in thousands of other more localised struggles workers have established their own organs of power. These factory committees and workers' councils have been made up of directly-elected delegates, immediately revocable at the will of their electors and accountable to general assemblies of the workers involved. It is these simply understood and easily organised democratic forms which workers themselves have created to extend their struggles against capitalism which we think offer the greatest possibilities for revolutionary change. Extended to cover the whole working class through a network of workplace and neighbourhood councils, linked nationally and internationally, these organisations will enable both the overthrow of the old order and the practical reorganisation of the new.

However, the workers' councils, originating in capitalist society, inevitably embody the occupational and territorial divisions of capitalism. As socialist society matures,

it will gradually break down such divisions — between city and countryside, between industrially overdeveloped and industrially under-developed regions, between "intellectual" and "manual" functions, between what are at present industrial, agricultural and domestic production, between labour and leisure, and so on. The replacement of alienated wage labour by freely associated effort allows people in socialism to overcome the needless over-specialisation and division of labour. Men, women and children will develop all faculties of human personality in an integrated social life.

Councils, then, will certainly be superseded by more advanced types of organisation as the new conditions become established.

SOCIALISM: Workers in capitalist society struggle in many ways to assert their needs as human beings against the profit-making motives of capital, to defend their conditions of life and work, and to contest the total control over production and society exercised by the capitalist class. To make advances in these struggles, especially during a period of crisis, workers have to develop the capacity to organise in a democratic and autonomous way, and unify struggles in different industries, areas, nations, and aspects of life (work, neighbourhood, personal relationships, ideas). This requires that understanding of the nature of these struggles, as connected parts of a general movement against capitalist domination, grow and spread.

This process, of which the activity of socialist groups is a part, leads to a clearer view among increasing numbers of workers of a new classless society (socialism or communism) as the aim of the struggle. The experience of democratic organisation (e.g. workers' councils) makes the possibility of a fully democratic society more apparent, while the growing understanding of capitalism emphasises the urgent necessity for socialism in order to solve working class problems and to safeguard the future of humanity.

Socialism has nothing to do with nationalisation or the state capitalist set-up in USSR and China. *Socialism as a society in which the whole world community own in common and control through agreed democratic processes the means for producing and distributing wealth* — such as factories, laboratories and telecommunications. The aim of productive effort and of all other democratically-administered social affairs (education, health, design of the environment, planning), is the satisfaction of the real, self-determined needs of human beings, and the fullest possible development of individuals and society. Thus goods and services are produced solely and directly for use, instead of for profitable sale on the market as commodities.

During the revolution, we see the workers' councils taking responsibility for continuing socially-useful production and re-organising it on a socialist basis. Wide areas of useless or harmful work required by capitalism will become unnecessary — the armed forces and armaments production; the protection of property; advertising; banking and other financial work; most of the state bureaucracy; mass motor production; and so on. Where possible, productive machinery will be adapted to useful purposes. Useful work will be re-organised to gear technology to human needs by automation of boring and dangerous tasks, by making goods to last much longer than at present (ending built-in obsolescence) by eliminating wasteful packaging, by conserving energy, etc.

As the working class abolishes all classes, including itself, and integrates their members into a single human community, the need for armed forces (for example, workers' militias to be used against violent anti-socialist minorities) disappears. We see workers' councils transcending the division between work and the rest of life, and co-ordinating by congresses and councils at industry, area, region, continent and world level.

The councils will use whatever aids are available such as computer and statistical systems through which the community can plan, assess and monitor its needs and productive efforts, discuss and make decisions on social issues; though not indiscriminately, taking into account the possible dangers of a specialist elite in control of advanced technology. Decisions about production will take into consideration people's desires and needs as voluntary producers, as consumers and as residents, and short and long term environmental and social consequences. Different types of decision will be made and different types of activity co-ordinated at different levels, with the aim probably of arranging matters at the least central level consistent with the effective use of technology. For example, although broad energy policy may be decided at world level, the use of local energy sources (solar, wind, geothermal) could enable local communes to satisfy many of their own needs.

The councils will rapidly overcome during the revolution the division of the world into nations and blocs, and establish a world community. The community will face enormous problems left by capitalism. It will have to co-operate with the inhabitants of the underdeveloped areas of the world to relieve their impoverishment as rapidly as possible, and to enable them to participate fully in social administration. It will have to salvage and protect the ravaged natural environment, re-build the world's cities and integrate city and countryside. It will have to reconstruct transport and energy systems, and provide better facilities for children. Priorities will have to be set for concentrating resources on the most urgent problems first - for example, the first problem is to guarantee basic necessities to the whole world population. Although money becomes obsolete when socialism is established, democratically agreed rationing of some goods and services may be necessary for some time until free access to everything becomes possible. In socialism, people will be able to experiment with a great variety of ways of living, working, and playing together, and society will develop in ways which we cannot now foresee in detail.

OTHER GROUPS:

We are not the only group which claims to want socialism, and we do not claim a monopoly of correct ideas. We do assert our right to put forward our views in our own manner, and do not believe that suppressing real differences for the sake of supposed unity of any benefit to our class. On this condition we are willing to co-operate with any other group or individuals on issues on which we agree. Also we are willing to discuss our ideas with others to find possible bases of agreement. However, we urge all those who agree with the ideas of this manifesto to join us in furthering the cause of socialism.

The points on which we differ or agree with others will generally be clear from the rest of this manifesto, but certain points can be made here. Leninism is an ideology of state capitalism and so those who claim to be Leninists must break, theoretically and practically, with its authoritarian and reformist tendencies or will be forced into a position of opposition to the working class.

The anti-organisational and anti-theoretical tendencies of traditional anarchism not only render it incapable of serious intervention, but encourage the elitism to which it claims to be opposed.

The dogmatic approach of certain left-communist groups, and their perpetual production of theoretical jargon, conceals a lack of any theory relevant to the class struggle today, and an inability to develop one. Likewise their sectarian approach reveals a lack of a serious account of the real development of consciousness and an inability to understand their own situation.

ROLE OF SOCIAL REVOLUTION:

Our group exists to assist the class struggle and the destruction of capitalism.

We reject both the bureaucratic conceptions of Leninists who seek to lead the working class into what they think to be socialism by bureaucratic manoeuvres, and the traditional anarchists who oppose all serious organisation.

Our members participate in the day-to-day struggle, both in organisations such as trade unions, tenants', squatters', and women's groups, and independently where we live and work. The aim of our work is to encourage the democratic organisation and understanding necessary for the working class to achieve its own emancipation. We fight against the division of people into theorists and activists and leaders and led, within and outside the group.

Social Revolution is itself a democratic organisation composed of local groups acting autonomously, but within the framework of an agreed policy. We believe that socialism in one country is an impossibility; therefore we seek to encourage the establishment of organisation in other countries and maintain contact with like-minded people and work with them towards the goal of world socialism.

ATTENTION LIBERTARIANS IN IRELAND !!!

We have received a request from Alan MacSimoin, 4 Ard Lui Park, Blackbrook, Co. Dublin to ask any of our readers in Ireland to get in touch with him, with a view to furthering libertarian activity in Ireland.

SOCIALISM AND ANTI-CAPITALISM

We publish the following as extracts from a letter sent to us by a comrade in Tokyo, Jun Crump. It is meant as a friendly criticism of some of the theory around which the Social Revolution Group has been developing, and also as a tentative contribution towards the discussion for the Group Manifesto.

"I would imagine that the most fundamental difference between me and yourselves is the view that has been expressed repeatedly in LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM: that socialism is 'the objective aim of the class struggle' (Revolutionary socialists - what does this mean today? -- L.C.5, P.22); that 'the struggle of the working class is always implicitly Socialist. The working class is striving all the time to own and control the means of production, to institute social ownership, abolish the wages system and inaugurate production for use, not the market. On this theory, socialist consciousness is the conscious recognition that Socialism is the goal of the class struggle.' (Trade Union Consciousness" -- L.C.4, P.9.) The second quotation given here is from an article by Adam Buick and I took it up with him when it first appeared. Part of what I wrote to him was as follows:-

'I must say frankly that this is a line of thinking which I do not share at all. I can readily agree, of course, that socialist propaganda must indeed start out from the tendencies which already exist in the class struggle but my own reason for holding this view is quite simply that I accept the proposition that it is only the working class as a whole which can liberate itself and build socialism. What this means for me is that those of us who are already socialists, because we recognise that activity as a vanguard is useless or worse, have to turn our attention to the mass of our fellow workers with their ideas as they are here and now. Put very crudely, socialist activity then boils down to attempting to build bridges between what workers are thinking now and what we hope they will start thinking in the future. I at any rate am convinced that the switch in working class ideas involves a tremendous subjective leap (that's why it's such a difficult task!) and does not simply consist in getting workers to recognise consciously what it is they are struggling for "objectively" anyway.'

"In the reply to me Adam defended the view expressed in his article and in the leaflet "Revolutionary socialists - what does this mean today?". But, in defending this view, I think he slightly (but significantly) shifted his ground. Reformulated, the argument became: 'that the spread of socialist understanding is not just the preaching of an ideal society but has a real basis or potentiality for growth in existing social trends'. Put this way, it is an idea which I can accept too. But the reason why I can accept it is that it is now saying something different from (what I understand, at any rate, by) the statement that socialism is 'the objective aim of the class struggle'. As I see it, the 'existing social trends' which give socialism 'a real basis or potentiality for growth' are the workers' anti-capitalism. Come what may, capitalism screws the workers down and come what may too, whether they like it or not, the workers are forced to fight back. Anti-capitalism is indeed always implicit in the workers' struggle - but this is a very different thing from saying that SOCIALISM is implicit, for the obvious reason that socialism is so much more than mere anti-capitalism. In fact, I would say that the level of consciousness required to achieve socialism is such that socialist understanding has to be explicit, has to be a consciously grasped image of a new society. If it is less than explicit, I don't see it as being socialism.

"I think Stephen Stefan described the working class' anti-capitalism very well when he wrote (in 'The Need for a Revolutionary Movement' - L.C.6, P.2) that 'workers try to assert their needs as human beings rather than as the containers of labour power. These attempts are thus implicitly in opposition to the profit-making requirements of capitalism ...'. Again, this is something I can agree with entirely and, if this is what Stephen actually means by the phrase that socialism is 'the objective aim of the class struggle' (I understand that it was Stephen who drafted the 'Revolutionary socialists'... pamphlet), all well and good. I would still say that this isn't socialism, however, that at the very best there is a terminological error here. It seems to me that we have to be very precise about where anti-capitalism ends and where socialism begins - and about the gulf between them which has to be bridged.

"Because of this I was very pleased in one way when I read the letter from the group's contact in FOR OURSELVES (L.C.7). I thought he hit the nail right on the head when he wrote at the end of his letter that 'The communist movement is NOT always present, and we must know when it is not and SAY SO.' To take an extreme example, anti-capitalism is still there in the workers' struggles even when they have been drafted into armies and are ferociously fighting capitalism's wars. Even when they are busy butchering each other, soldiers resist the armies' attempts to de-humanise them, but to tell ourselves that in doing so they are being implicitly socialist is surely no more than wishful thinking. Anti-capitalism is no more than the springboard from which socialist consciousness can be attained. The worker on the springboard still has to consciously decide to jump - not simply have it pointed out to him(/her) that he (/she) is jumping anyway (as you seem to be saying).

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"It's an understandable reaction that many socialists should want to keep up their spirits by kidding themselves that elements of socialism exist where, in fact, there are none. Thus even the FOR OURSELVES member comes out with the nonsense that 'It is now clear to more and more of our class that the world is literally coming to an end, that none of the old ways will do any more, that there is NO FUTURE in capitalism, however reformed or modified.' This just isn't true, as I fancy even the FOR OURSELVES man might recognise if he calmed down for a minute and didn't let his prose run away with him. If he tried to put a figure on this 'more and more of our class', we would be down in the less-than-1% range. I'm especially aware of this living in Japan. The backwardness of the working class here is quite stunning. As you no doubt know, Japan's rate of inflation has been outstripping even England's, yet the fight put up by the working class to defend its living standards has been quite derisory. The government fixed a 15% ceiling for wage rises (which meant a massive wage cut in real terms) and there have hardly any breaches in this norm. Indeed many sections of the working class settled for less than 10% and even what is almost universally regarded as the most militant group of workers - the railway workers - caved in after a three days' stoppage (which they announced at the time as being a 'general strike'!) and settled for 14.9%. When the level of anti-capitalism of one of the most important sections of the world working class remains as low as this, to start talking in the way your FOR OURSELVES correspondent did is quite frankly little short of daft.

"If we look back over the years we can see how even the very best revolutionaries have often managed to maintain their commitment to communism only by assuring themselves that, compared with a non-revolutionary past, 'things are different today'. Only a very few have had the courage to look at a non-revolutionary period squarely in the face (this has been one of the best features of Bordigist groups such as PROGRAMME COMMUNISTE and INVARIANCE, although one has to criticise them in other ways). Unfortunately, this seems to me to be a very persistent (and damaging) trend - and one which I think is evident in the group around LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM. You wrote in the DRAFT STATEMENT OF PRINCIPLES (L.C. 7, p.23) that a genuine socialist group 'does not propagate socialism as a doctrine, but tries to clarify the connection of and unite fragmented struggles with one another and with the socialist objective.' I don't actually disagree with this - in fact, I'm well aware of the huge advance it represents on the approach which those of us who were in the SPGB* adopted before, where socialist activity was seen as nothing more than the preaching of a disembodied doctrine - but, on the other hand, I do regard it as being altogether too abstract and ahistorical to have much meaning. There are whole periods when, however enthusiastic the efforts made by socialists along the lines you suggest, socialism manages to survive only as a doctrine kept alive by small revolutionary groups virtually isolated from the bulk of the working class.

"I haven't forgotten the section of the 'Revolutionary Socialists' leaflet (Section 4 - 'The Consequences of a Sectarian Attitude') where you partially took up this problem. Like you, I am aware that the sectarian attitude of the SPGB and others leads to 'disillusionment, pessimism or hostility to the world in general and the working class in particular' (L.C.5, p.22).

"What in my opinion made the SPGB's sectarianism so hopeless was not that it led to pessimistic conclusions but that it had no answer to the question of how socialist consciousness arises within the working class. All it could do was to keep plugging away and leave the outcome of it all in the hands of the gods. Your own answer to this question appears to hinge on the proposition that socialism is 'the objective aim of the class struggle'. As I've already explained, this isn't a view I can accept. Like you, I've wrestled with this question but the answer I have come up with is a different one.

"Put in very shorthand fashion, the way I now look at the development of socialism is as follows:

1. I have come to look upon Marx and Engels as bourgeois revolutionaries in the same way as Lenin was. More specifically, I see them as the theoretical leaders of the bourgeois revolutionary movement (social democracy) which culminated in the German revolution of 1918. This isn't to deny that there was a socialist component to Marx and Engels' theory - and a tremendously valuable component at that, from which we can learn a great deal. But it is to say that the socialist area of their thought was nothing more than a more or less disembodied theory expressing an entirely different (bourgeois) political practice. I won't go into this any more here since I have already half-written an article on the subject and expect to have it finished before much longer.

2. I now take the view that there never has been anything that could legitimately be called a socialist movement. Socialist groups have existed but all of them (SPGB, councilists, Bordigists, anarcho-communists, etc.) have been little more than the proletarian driftwood washed ashore on the beaches of the bourgeois revolutions (or of the bourgeois revolutionary movements leading up to these revolutions).

3. This is not to underestimate the tremendous value for the international working class of the socialist tradition embodied in the currents which I mentioned above. Something we can take

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enormous encouragement from is that a body of socialist ideas which pose a fundamental challenge to capitalism have been maintained in this unbroken tradition from the nineteenth century down to the present day. Not only have socialist ideas been passed on from one generation of workers to another but, even more significant is the fact that new groups of workers have in different places and at different times spontaneously come up with the same answer to their problems as previous generations of socialists have done. Despite the derogatory numbers involved, this is positive evidence that the position of the working class within capitalism - and the anti-capitalist response of the working class to capitalism - act as a springboard from which workers can achieve socialist consciousness.

4. I would still say, however, that there has never been anything which we could strictly call a socialist movement. This is not only because the numbers of socialists have always been so small, but also because socialism has always been an impossibility - given existing material conditions. Socialism was not possible in Marx and Engel's day, did not become possible 'about the turn of the century' (Draft Statement of Principles, L.C.7 - P.24.) and is not even possible here and now. The reason why I say that the material conditions do not exist for establishing socialism is not that the existing means of production could not be rapidly expanded so as to be able to produce an abundance. Even this has to be (at least roughly) proved, but for the moment I am prepared to accept that this is the case. But the material conditions which are required for achieving socialism are not just those where abundance becomes technically possible. On the contrary, the material conditions required for achieving socialism are those where the possibility of abundance forces itself unrelentingly into the working class' consciousness - activating the mass of the workers' anti-capitalist sentiments into socialism, if you like. Such a state of affairs does not yet exist.

5. 'Socialism or Barbarism' is not just a handy slogan for socialists to bandy about. This, however, is the way it tends to be used. If one examines the publications of even those socialists who regularly make use of this slogan, one finds that references to the future appear in their writings generally without any qualifications at all. Yet today, when the threat of barbarism is so real, even to assume that we have a future is to assume too much. If 'Socialism or Barbarism' means anything more than a ritual catchword, it is that there is a race in progress between the working class achieving socialism and the capitalist system driving us all back into barbarism. That race has been going on for a good while now and there can be no doubt which of the two is in the lead. If, for example, we take as a random starting point the insistent posing of the alternatives 'Socialism or Barbarism' by groups such as CONTEMPORARY ISSUES in the period following the Second World War, we can see that since those days virtually no progress at all has been made towards socialism. On the other hand, when we look at the accumulating potential for reducing the world to barbarism

6. Frankly, the conclusions I have drawn are that our chances of achieving socialism are slim. I am not a betting man but, if I were, I know which of the two alternatives (the working class achieving socialism or the capitalist system driving us all back into barbarism) would have my money. All the same, as long as there is a chance of achieving socialism I will continue as a socialist. Come to think of it, even if there were no chance whatsoever of achieving socialism, I would still remain a socialist. As long as capitalism persists, my anti-capitalist response to it - along with that of the rest of our class - is guaranteed as I struggle to live like a human being. In my own case, not mere anti-capitalism either. As one individual worker, I've already taken the leap towards socialist understanding. The trouble is that time is running dangerously short while the material conditions develop which are likely to induce the rest of the class to come to a similar decision.

THE TYRANNY OF JARGON:

Since we produced the first issue of *Libertarian Communism* (under the name *Critical Theory and Revolutionary Practice*) we've published a good number of articles which could more or less be described as "theoretical". They've not been as detailed as those published by some other socialist groups, discussing as they have done broad areas of contention amongst socialists rather than the minutiae of individual points, but nonetheless I think they can be described as primarily theoretical, though aimed at provoking further discussion. After two years I think that the time has come to discuss the actual "theory of theory" and have a critical look at what we've been doing.

This essay has largely been provoked by the reaction of a friend to *Libertarian Communism* No. 7. Basically she's not an explicitly political person, but nonetheless was

interested enough to read the journal. Her reaction went roughly along the following lines: "You claim to be libertarians aiming at a free and equal society; yet your journal is elitist. When your revolution comes you'll have created through your use of esoteric language a 'them' and 'us' situation. There's a danger of 'them' not understanding 'your' jargon, which raises the possibilities of a leaders and led situation. This may be not what you want, but it's what your activities could produce."

I'd had some ideas along this line for a while, but my mind was made up when I read a passage from L.C. 7. I was called upon by my friend to explain a passage in the Letter from California. Now I've fancied myself, after four years in the socialist movement, as fairly well equipped to understand the stuff we produce; the only trouble was that I could not in this case. It read like this:

"We might say, then, that the class-in-itself movement is engendered by the contradiction between the interest of capitalism as a whole, which is to pay for labour power at its value and to expand the reproduction of the whole system, and the interest of any given capital, which is to drive down the price of labour power in order to maximize profit." (Page 14)

After 15-20 minutes trying to understand it, I finally gave up and resolved to ask another friend who's more theoretically "capable". He, after 7 years in the "movement", did in fact explain it along roughly these lines:

"The interests of the system-as-a-whole and the class-in-itself movement coincide; the system-as-a-whole needs to expand, to do this it must pay for labour at its value; on the other hand, any individual capital, to maintain its profits, more or less needs to pay as little as possible. Therein lies the contradiction that generates the class-in-itself movement, yet maintains it as a class for capital."

Okay, fair enough, this still relies on some knowledge of the jargon but at least it's fairly clear - and not much longer. I will concede that this was from a letter so perhaps the language was justified, but other examples come to mind, for example some of my previous articles; what would someone only one year or maybe two months in the "movement" make of them?

Before I continue I'll state that in my mind theoretical discussion is absolutely essential, empiricism leads to too many time-wasting and damaging errors, the role of theoretical discussion is surely to give the "movement" some notion rather than mere notion. So I'm not advocating that we adopt an attitude of theoretical philistinism and stop producing discussion material. I'm arguing for more theory written in plain language of a non-elitist manner. However, I'd like to discuss the point a bit further - and its implications.

First I'd like to discuss the elitist concept behind the usage of high-sounding theoretical jargon. Firstly, your budding revolutionary either joins or sympathizes with a revolutionary group. If we assume s/he is fairly normal in enthusiasm, s/he will start by reading a fair amount of literature. After a time s/he will begin to understand this strange language used by revolutionaries, though still pretty much at the level of translating it each time s/he comes across a theoretical concept. As time passes, s/he will cease to translate, the concepts will have become understood in their own right, much like when a person learns a foreign language, and they will become second nature. Most people who are determined enough can reach this level given a fair amount of study.

However, there are a number of results from this process +

1. A form of hierarchy develops within a group or "movement". Some comrades understand the language better than others, they take the role of intellectual leaders or permanent theorists- this in itself is harmful to the healthy development of the group. I'm not here stating that experience is not a useful resource to draw from, but that this experience should not be barred by unnatural barriers. From this some of the "less able" comrades will go on to become new "permanent theorists", others will become "activists" of one form or another. So capitalism's evil division of labour re-asserts itself again.
2. Hierarchy develops outside the group or "movement". The theorists are looked upon, or look upon themselves, as potential leaders. Again harmful development.
3. We become so used to thinking "theory" that we forget the "translations", though still able to understand the concepts. Thus our propaganda activities become much more difficult to carry out effectively.
4. Revolutionary groups attract people who profess democratic principles, yet in fact (probably subconsciously) desire the role of "leader" or guru.

Now, why does this happen (i.e. why do we degenerate into using this theoretical jargon). I think there are three reasons — at least:

Firstly because we are lazy, undoubtedly once the jargon is understood it's easier to use than English. Secondly, amongst certain groups because socialism is seen as a science; real scientists have scientific language, so shouldn't "Scientific socialists" have one too? This of course overlooks the fact that one of our objectives is to overcome the division between skills and knowledge (and labour!). Every cock's a walker? Maybe, but not a scientist, or even a socialist! Thirdly, we all lead pretty ordinary, alienated lives. Understanding and speaking this language enables us to look important in the eyes of our fellows, so competition raises its ugly head, the paradox is seen of trying to overcome alienation by alienation.

So what is the solution to this very real problem? I realise that we do need to use some concepts that require a form of specialised language. However I think we should make as many efforts as possible to minimise and explain the usage of this language. Not that we should assume that those who are reading the stuff we produce are morons; experience shows that the vast majority of workers are rational, intelligent people. Certainly those interested in socialist discussion will be willing to put up with a bit of difficulty. But at all times we should remember that means and ends are linked; if we use elitist methods we must expect elitist results. It may take a lot of effort to learn to be libertarian, but it is absolutely essential.

Bob Miller

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"The Dispossessed"

by Ursula LeGuin.

In ordinary fiction the writer moves characters and events on a social and physical background selected from her or his own limited (and often very limited) experience. In what for lack of a more accurate name is called science fiction (science playing a role of little importance in much of it), the writer is free to create whole universes of space and time, and fill them with myriads of worlds, beings, devices, happenings. The endless opportunities which sci-fi offers to ingenuity and imagination make it, in my view, the most difficult and the most potentially fertile art-form.

Yet socialists who are addicted to the genre will be conscious of, and sometimes irritated by, how abysmally most writers fall short of this potential. However subtle their technicalities, or processes of time travel, their fantasies are strictly imprisoned within the nightmares of world capitalism - or, at best, of class society. Western authors fill the galaxies with feudal tyrannies, ruthless traders, imperial wars, fears of alien conquest, throwing magnified across the stars the most horrific and primitive themes of our prehistory, past and present. Official Soviet authors stick to an idealised version of their own bureaucratic order, but generally try to escape from ideological control by concentrating on the scientific aspect.

One of the few writers with a social imagination who I've come across is Ursula (Kroeber) LeGuin. Apart from her latest novel, *The Dispossessed*, I remember reading her book *The Left Hand of Darkness*, and one or two short stories of hers which have appeared in SF anthologies. It appears that she has also written *A Wizard of Earthsea*, *The Tombs of Atuan*, *The Farthest Shore*, *City of Illusions* and *The Lathe of Heaven*. A story I recall was about a strange, happy, fairylike people, and I noticed that their way of life was, for a change, a Socialist one. *The Left Hand of Darkness* is about a planet perpetually in deep winter, whose inhabitants are all of the same sex, mating by means of monthly mutations (though many other themes are also explored).

The Dispossessed is a work of great insight, power and beauty, and has moved me as a great deal. It is set on two planets of the sun Tau Ceti, Urras and Anarres, though other worlds of Comrade LeGuin's universe - Main and Terra and Chiffowar - also get a look-in. Urras is a capitalist world, a world of "Profit-States", on which two centuries ago a working-class insurrection was defeated - the Odonian Movement, named after the thinker Odo who inspired it (and, unfortunately for a model of a genuine democratic movement, also seems to have led it). The Odonians were not rid of by being settled on the Moon, Anarres, a bleak world. The resources and technology available to the settlers were barely adequate to their needs. Now the physicist Shevek returns to visit Urras - to complete his General Field Theory in temporal physics, to advance the revolution on Urras, and to break the self-imposed stagnation and isolation of his own.

The Anarresti society portrayed is a genuinely Socialist one (also referred to as Communist and Anarchist). Production is organised by democratically-run syndicates and coordinated by a computer-based system, which is staffed by rotating delegates and sets of volunteers selected by lot called PDC (Production and Distribution Coordination). There is free access to goods and services, except when natural disasters make rationing necessary; voluntary work, integrated with education and play; complete social equality of all 20 million men and women of the community. The author takes full advantage of the chance to discuss the types of problem faced by a socialist society, and how they are dealt with.

Anarres is no Utopia free of problems or pain; there are severe crop failures, sharp disagreements, the dangers of conformity to public opinion. Indeed, Shevek and his comrades in the Syndicate of Initiative are fighting the start of a bureaucratic degeneration, caused by the stringencies of a near-famine period. But the author's sympathies are clearly with Anarres, rather than with the Urrasti system, whose failings are explored by a bemused and scandalised Shevek in what is a brilliant satire of present-day Earth society private and state capitalist. But in fact Earth is represented not only by Urras but also by Terra, destroyed by nuclear war and environmental breakdown. "We forfeited our chance for Anarres centuries ago, before it ever came into being," as Ambassador Keng says.

Ursula Le Guin dealt with the issues of sex role in *The Left Hand of Darkness*. In this book her approach to women's liberation is clearer and sharper, and an integral part of her overall socialist approach.

If I have concentrated on the more "political" side of the book, this does not mean that it is a purely propagandist work whose characters exist to illustrate various social criticisms. (If I had tried to write something of this kind, that is the sort of hack work I'd probably have produced.) People have their individual characteristics, idiosyncrasies and concerns; wide questions of time, the universe and the meaning of human life are considered as well as those of social organisation. Nevertheless it is also a through piece of argument for Socialism.